PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 94

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

THIRD SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1985-86

COMPRISING PERIOD
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IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 94**

NINTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1985-86

House of Commons

Monday 17 March 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

London Docklands Light Railway

1. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement concerning the current state of discussions on applications concerning the London docklands light railway and its proposed extension.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I have nothing further to add to what my hon. Friend the Minister of State told the House during the debate on the Second Reading of the London Docklands Railway (City Extension) Bill on 6 March, at columns 532-35.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Secretary of State recall that his hon. Friend told the House that public money would support the City extension of the docklands light railway, and that instead of requiring it to be privately run it would, if constructed, be run by London Regional Transport? Has the sum that will go towards this extension been agreed, and, whatever the amount, will it not mean a subsidy to the developers of Canary wharf?

Mr. Ridley: The negotiations are not yet complete and, therefore, I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman the outcome. However, there are two elements to the cost of the westward extension to the Bank—the capital cost and the profit or loss of operating the railway in the public sector. I confirm that it will be operated in the public sector.

Mr. Mikardo: Is the Docklands Light Railway Company taking any steps to ascertain views on its proposals from the people in the area in which the railway will operate? If not, will he suggest that it would be in the company's best interests to seek to meet representatives of the organisations that represent those people?

Mr. Ridley: I do not know what the body is to which the hon. Gentleman refers. The procurer of the initial railway is the London Docklands Development Corporation. The transport users' consultative committee arrangements will also apply when the railway comes into operation.

Transport Act 1985

2. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how he intends to monitor the effect on public transport services of full operation of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. Ridley: My Department's Transport and Road Research Laboratory has established a programme for monitoring the effects of the Act with the help of various consultants. The results will be made public from time to time.

Mr. Hamilton: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that many people, particularly the elderly, are concerned that when deregulation takes place there will be no late-night or weekend buses? Has he discovered whether, when he has monitored the situation, that is so?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman will be extremely pleased to know that, according to my information, on the day when registrations closed about 15,000 bus services were registered. If they do not include late-night or weekend services, the county council in the area affected has the right and the duty to go out to tender to obtain extra services on contract. That is what the public assistance to county council expenditure is for. I am sure that the hon.

Gentleman will join me in welcoming the fact that 15,000 services have been registered at no cost whatever to the ratepayer or taxpayer.

Mr. Adley: Has my right hon. Friend noticed that since the liberalisation of coach services his Department has been forced to put governors on coaches because of excessive speeds on motorways? Is he further aware that the Metropolitan police are extremely worried and aggravagated about the result that my right hon. Friend's coach policy has had on the routes that coaches use in London, and also on parking? In particular, will he review the impact of his policy on the behaviour of coach operators?

Mr. Ridley: I cannot accept any connection between the deregulation of long-distance coach services and the behaviour of individual drivers on the road. In some cases it is deplorable, but in many cases coach drivers are extremely good. If the coaching industry is prospering and expanding and needs more access to the capital, my hon. Friend will join me in welcoming that, because it produces extra, cheap and efficient services for customers, which is what transport is all about.

Mr. James Lamond: Is the Minister aware that some of the predictions in Committee on the Transport Bill, as it was, are already coming to fruition? Is he aware that there are thousands of redundancies among transport workers, that many small villages are to be left without bus services, that fares are already forecast to increase and, all in all, that this is the biggest fiasco over which even he has presided?

Mr. Ridley: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that many of the forecasts made are coming to fruition. The first is the 15,000 registered services without subsidy. The second is the extraordinarily successful effect of minibus introduction, which has been a direct consequence of the Bill, and which in Exeter now has three times the patronage that it had before the Bill, is providing hundreds of extra jobs for drivers, and is running at a profit instead of a loss. I do not know what the hon. Gentleman is complaining about.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Is the Minister aware that some councils and councillors have a vested interest in ensuring that deregulation does not work, irrespective of the damage that they may do to their undertakings or to the people whom they are supposed to serve? Will the monitoring process recognise that grave danger?

Mr. Ridley: Yes. I take my hon. Friend's point, which is perfectly correct. The monitoring process will not only have a computerised data base of all bus service registrations, but will include detailed studies of selected areas and case studies of particular developments. We shall watch it carefully.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Is there not already evidence to show that the number of services registered is far below even the most pessimistic forecasts, and are in some cases as low as 20 per cent.? Does the Minister recall his statement to the Bus and Coach Council that operators are now free to operate without the constraints of a social conscience? Does that not mean that the policy will reduce vast swathes of the country to nothing more than open prisons?

Mr. Ridley: No, Sir. Whereas the National Bus Company expected about 70 per cent. of existing routes to be registered, the figure is more likely to be 80 per cent. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will cheer at another piece of good news. It is a major benefit that the responsibility for providing socially necessary and desirable routes on social and political grounds is now firmly and properly where it should be — with local authorities, not the NBC.

Transport Act 1985

3. **Mr. Bob Edwards** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with passenger transport executive staff concerning transitional arrangements following from abolition of the metropolitan counties and implementation of the Transport Act 1985.

5. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with transitional arrangements for public transport in the metropolitan counties.

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): I have on a number of occasions during the past few months met representatives of the new PTAs and their PTEs to discuss various aspects of public transport in the metropolitan counties, including the transitional arrangements consequent upon the Local Government Act 1985 and the Transport Act 1985. These arrangements seem to be reasonable.

Mr. Edwards: Is the Minister aware that the trade unions concerned do not think that the arrangements are reasonable? They are afraid that national agreements are being scrapped which will lead to absolute starvation competition among the workers in the transport industry.

Mr. Mitchell: I can tell the hon. Gentleman that £3 million has been allocated for the west midlands for this purpose. We shall consider applications for borrowing consent, should that prove to be insufficient.

Mr. Eastham: Is it not a fact that none of the local transport authorities believe that the Government are improving the services, and that every authority is predicting chaos on public transport? Are not local authorities saying constantly that they are now underfunded and, consequently, are introducing massive fare increases and massive redundancies?

Mr. Mitchell: For the Greater Manchester area, about £83 million is available. That should enable the purchase of a substantial number of additional services over and above those registered. The hon. Gentleman and other Labour Members representing metropolitan county areas have known since last summer that if they persuaded the PTAs to start gradually increasing fares, more bus workers jobs would be saved. They have failed to do that, and they have failed the busmen.

Sir Peter Emery: Will my hon. Friend look carefully at the strange arrangements that have been made by the GLC, particularly the institution of a large number of bus lanes and large islands in the centre of the road, which seem intended to do only one thing—bring traffic to a standstill?

Mr. Mitchell: I note what my hon. Friend has said, but his point is somewhat outside the question.

Mr. Parris: In the past, have metropolitan authorities been getting more, or less, than their fair share of the total amount of subsidy?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend has put his finger on a good way of measuring the appropriate support. Expenditure per person of the county population on bus subsidy is £2 in Oxfordshire, £3 in Warwickshire, £23 in West Yorkshire, £30 in Greater Manchester, £53 in Merseyside and £60 in South Yorkshire.

Mr. Snape: They keep voting for it.

Mr. Mitchell: In other words, the expenditure in the metropolitan counties has been grossly extravagant compared with expenditure in the rest of the country.

Mr. Snape: They vote for it.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape), who keeps interrupting from a sedentary position, should know that, unfortunately, there is no direct co-relationship between the ratepayers and the voters.

Mr. Madden: Will the Minister of State accept that when he comes to Bradford on Wednesday he will find a large number of people who want to maintain a good bus service in West Yorkshire, who are disgusted at the proportion of services that will be cut, and are dismayed that up to 800 bus staff will be made redundant? Will he put his arguments to the ratepayers and electors of Bradford, who want to keep the best possible transport services and do not want to see the Government kill them all?

Mr. Mitchell: Perhaps the hon. Member also wishes me to tell the people of Bradford that the high level of rates is part of the reason for the high level of unemployment. The people of Bradford are as anxious as those in other parts of the country to serve in the increasing job opportunities being created by this Government.

Mr. Stott: The Secretary of State, as well as the Minister of State, have made much of the figure of 15,000 services being registered. Would the Minister not have done a greater service to the House of Commons had he been more honest and expressed that figure as a percentage? Is he aware that I am advised that in Greater Manchester, only 40 per cent. of the services have been registered as profitable, leaving 60 per cent. of the routes currently being run as unprofitable? Will not those groups have to be subsidised by the ratepayers or the taxpayers? Do the Secretary of State and the Minister of State not know full well that the money allocated to the metropolitan authorities falls far below the level required to maintain those services? If the Minister is not aware of that, he should have been with me in Saddleworth last Thursday night, when I spoke in the constituency of the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens), where not one route has been registered as profitable? If he cannot tell me, will he tell his hon. Friend whether those buses will still be running after October?

Mr. Mitchell: I can give the hon. Gentleman the information for which he asks, and I hope that he will be pleased when he hears it. Between two thirds and three quarters of the routes being run now have been registered. In addition, I can tell him that although in Greater Manchester a smaller proportion of routes are registered, a much larger allocation of finance is available—about £83 million. One could buy many bus routes with £83 million.

Mr. Dickens: As my constituency has been mentioned, is my hon. Friend surprised to learn that the people of Littleborough and Saddleworth have been grumbling for many years about their deplorable bus services? We hope that the plans laid before Parliament will give those people the excellent service for which they have hoped for many years.

Mr. Mitchell: In recent years there has been a chronic decline in bus services throughout the country. We have every reason to believe that the changes that we have introduced will stem that decline and, in many places, lead to additional services.

British Rail

4. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail, and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Ridley: I last met the chairman on 17 February and discussed a wide range of matters of current interest.

Mr. Maclennan: What resources may be made available from the Department of Transport to the chairman and the board to carry out their policy of improving the track between Wick, Thurso and Inverness by bridging the Dornoch firth and laying a new railway line?

Mr. Ridley: Investment in track, bridges, or any other material is entirely a matter for the board to consider. It puts forward plans, and we always approve them if they are viable. We have received no investment application in relation to the Dornoch firth bridge.

Mr. Fry: When my right hon. Friend sees Sir Robert Reid, will he tell him that the recent statement by the management at Leicester that British Rail does not want so many commuters from Wellingborough and Kettering and that they will price them away is hardly a marketing policy to be commended, nor should it be expected of British Rail?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend will agree that that is a matter for the management of British Rail, which must be responsible for what its managers say. I am sure that he will take the matter up with the chairman.

Mr. Anderson: When the Minister meets the chairman, will he make clear his views about the swathe of redundancies on the freight side in south Wales, from the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) and the Severn tunnel junction in the east through to Llanelli in the west, both of which will be closed, which will have a considerable effect on job losses in the Principality, and on the environment, because of the increased lorry movements? Does he recognise that this is due principally to the Government's policy of destroying the manufacturing base of south Wales and imposing an impossible freight target on British Rail?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman knows that that is a matter for the management of British Rail. It has agreed the present PSO target and the target for freight, and it must decide how to implement that policy. The hon. Gentleman should take the matter up with British Rail.

Mr. Robert Atkins: When he next meets the chairman of British Rail, will my right hon. Friend tell him that my

constituents and I are fed up with the west coast intercity line being the Cinderella of British Rail, in that it has no 125s or advanced passenger trains, punctuality is no more than a joke, and the information given to passengers before and during travelling on the line is inadequate? Will he tell him that there must be some changes, because I am fed up with receiving letters from my constituents, who express rightful concern about the quality of the service?

Mr. Ridley: I am sure that the chairman will read *Hansard* and see the comments of my hon. Friend and other hon. Members. However, I must repeat that these are matters for British Rail. The House would not expect me to be permanently employed conveying messages from hon. Members to the chairman of British Rail.

Mr. Snape: When the Secretary of State next meets the chairman of British Rail, will he discuss punctuality with him? Does he agree with the secretary of the Central Transport Consultative Committee that many routes are causing serious concern and that the CTCC is strongly urging British Rail to improve standards? Does it give him any cause for comfort to know that 48 per cent. of eastern region trains and 34 per cent. of trains on southern region ran late last year? Does he think that Sir Robert Reid is making a pretty rotten job of running British Rail, and if the Secretary of State considers that he could do better, has he thought of applying for the job himself?

Mr. Ridley: I must repudiate the hon. Gentleman's last suggestion. I believe that Sir Robert Reid is extremely good at running British Rail. I do not think that I would be at all good at it. Equally, Sir Robert Reid would not be quite so good at running my Department. As for the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, the level of standards expected of British Rail, including punctuality, is laid down in the objectives which I gave to the chairman two and a half years ago. It is up to the management of British Rail to achieve those standards.

London (Lorry Ban)

6. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his assessment of the effect of the Greater London council lorry ban which came into operation on 31 January.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I am not aware of any beneficial effects so far for Londoners in return for the considerable sums the exercise has cost.

Mr. Chapman: Will my hon. Friend tell the House how much this pointless exercise has cost London ratepayers? Does he agree that the best possible way to keep unnecessary lorry loads off the streets of London has been the construction and will be the completion of the M25 orbital motorway?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes, Sir. The M25 has reduced lorry mileage in London by over 20 per cent. and it has reduced the number of lorries on some major roads by 40 per cent. The lorry ban exercise has included 2,000 signs, 20,000 permits and 200,000 pages of application forms. It will probably cost £250,000 a year to run and the probable capital cost will be £2 million. It seems to me that that is not very good value for money.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Under-Secretary of State aware that large numbers of London residents support the lorry ban and want it to be enforced, and that the reason why it is not working as effectively as it should is that the Metropolitan police refuse to enforce it? Will he have a word with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department and get the law enforced, or is the Under-Secretary of State prepared to enforce only the pieces of law with which he agrees, not those with which he disagrees?

Mr. Bottomley: May I say to the honourable chairman of the Greater London council that if a little boy saw the honourable chairman in his clothes and pointed out that he was wearing none, the hon. Gentleman might be covered with embarrassment, despite his finery. I am unaware of any of the applications for exemption being turned down, so it is very difficult to see that the lorry ban is having any effect.

Mr. Stanbrook: Do the Government have any reason to believe that there is a demand for lorries to enter London unnecessarily?

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Neither lorry users nor local residents want lorries to be where they are not needed. The plain truth is that lorries do not go through London when it is unnecessary. That is where the M25 has helped. It is also worth noting that 250 width and weight restrictions are in force in London and that they are not so controversial as this apparent lorry ban.

Mr. Greenway: Is my hon. Friend the Minister aware that the Greater London council is said to have appointed 50,000 snoops to watch the police to see that they are doing their job? Would it not be better if the GLC were looking after residents whose homes are damaged by vibration and noise from heavy lorries than interfering with the course of law?

Mr. Bottomley: It would be sensible for people to spend a little more time looking at what the Government are trying to do to develop quieter lorries, to support sensible local lorry bans and to try to ensure that effort is put into worthwhile projects rather than into things which apparently have no beneficial effect.

London Assessment Studies

7. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the consultants' reports on the four London assessment studies.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Later this year.

Mr. Cartwright: Is the Minister satisfied with the fact that it has already taken more than 18 months to produce an initial report merely identifying problems in four of London's main traffic corridors? In view of the doubt and uncertainty that those studies inevitably create in the areas concerned, how much longer will we have to wait before we see, not the problems, but the solutions to those problems being put forward?

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman will accept that one of the reasons for the extended period for the first stage is public consultation. People want to be involved and to give their views. The second problem is that the GLC was not co-operative in sharing opportunities for gaining information.

Mr. Dubs: Is not the truth that the proposed trunk roads and other schemes in London are enormously unpopular

and that the Minister is worried lest news gets out before the local elections, because that will have a cataclysmic effect on the prospects of Tories standing on 8 May?

Mr. Bottomley: That sort of scaremongering comes ill from the hon. Gentleman, although we might have expected it from some of his hon. Friends. The plain truth is that anyone who lives in or represents south London is aware of the massive traffic problems and how residents are having to cope with through traffic. We are not proposing new trunk roads in those areas, but we are trying to look at the problems and come forward with solutions. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman has a word with me and the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) afterwards.

British Airways

8. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress towards the privatisation of British Airways.

Mr. Ridley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) on 12 March.

Mr. McCrindle: Now that privatisation has been postponed, and without prejudice to the current talk of a management buy-out, will my right hon. Friend be able to reassure me that the other principal plank of the Government's aviation policy — the cultivation and encouragement of competition among British airlines on the appropriate routes — is not equally likely to be postponed? Has he any new initiatives to announce in that respect this afternoon?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend knows that the policy on competition was settled in the White Paper "Airline Competition Policy", Cmnd. 9366, in October 1984, which was endorsed by the House. I assure him that we will continually watch opportunities for increasing competition in the airline industry, but I have no plans for reopening the whole matter again.

Mr. Carter-Jones: Will the Secretary of State give a firm assurance to British Airways, whether publicly or privately owned, that neither he nor any member of his Government will prevent British Airways from ordering and purchasing from now until 1995 the appropriate aircraft to keep it in the lead?

Mr. Ridley: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Dicks: When will my right hon. Friend look to the wellbeing of British Airways, as he always does for the British Airports Authority? Will he consider positively the proposed management-staff buy-out by British Airways?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The mystery about the alleged management buy-out proposal is that nobody seems to know who suggested the idea. The chairman of British Airways has written to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and in that letter, which is now in the public domain, to coin a phrase, one paragraph says:

"We would prefer this"—

the privatisation—

"to be accomplished by means of a public flotation and will pursue such intention with much vigour while continuing to work closely with Nicholas Ridley and his Department. Furthermore, we support HMG's efforts to achieve a successful outcome in the current negotiations with the United States Government over the capacity annex to the Bermuda II agreement."

I am not quite clear what all the row was about.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Secretary of State aware that we are grateful to the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) for revealing that Lord King of Wartnaby invited 140 Tory Members of Parliament to a gargantuan beanfeast in the Savoy? Does the right hon. Gentleman think that that is a good way of spending public money? Will he find out what that was all about, and will he do something about it?

Mr. Ridley: I am sure that the time will come when the board of British Airways will wish to entertain Labour Members. Now that we have reached a position where all the pressure in the House and in the media is to criticise the Government for not proceeding more speedily with the privatisation of British Airways, the hon. Gentleman might find a way of getting himself a hot, free lunch.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is not the purpose of privatisation to give the investor a risk-free investment? Does he not further agree that privatised concerns such as British Aerospace, BP —not to mention the British Airports Authority—are, indeed, subject to the whim of the Government? Moreover, many of us regard it as unacceptable that the flotation of British Airways should be delayed because of an inability to write a prospectus.

Mr. Ridley: I am sure that my hon. Friend knows enough about the subject to recognise that the writing of a prospectus places a heavy and important legal responsibility on the vendor and the board to ensure that it contains entirely accurate information about the future, upon which investment decisions can be based. That applies to any company. I regret to say that at present the difficulties involved in doing that are too great. However, I hope that the time will very soon come when we are able to do it.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Although we understand the Secretary of State's embarrassment in not coming to the House last week to tell us that, yet again, he had had to postpone BA's flotation, can he be a bit more forthcoming now? Will he tell us plainly that BA's privatisation will be abandoned and that he will have urgent discussions — I gather there will be an opportunity later this afternoon — with Lord King about the development programme and the replacement of BA's fleet? In particular, will the right hon. Gentleman make it clear to Lord King that the privatisation of the helicopter division of British Airways should cease forthwith?

Mr. Ridley: I must correct the hon. Gentleman. I have not postponed BA's privatisation. The position before last week was that we hoped that it would be possible to privatise it during the coming financial year. That is still the position. The Government never mentioned a summer date. I have already given the assurance that equipment that is needed by BA, and which passes the viability test, will be sanctioned by the Government. Moreover, I have no intention of interfering with commercial decisions that BA may or may not take on disposing of its helicopter subsidiary.

Mr. Higgins: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the success of BA's privatisation is likely to be much greater if outstanding problems are resolved before the publication of the prospectus, rather than afterwards?

Mr. Ridley: That is true. As we hope to involve the managers and staff of BA, together with many small investors, it is most important that the prospectus is straightforward and does not mislead them.

Tavistock

9. **Sir Peter Mills** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration his Department is giving to traffic levels in Tavistock; and what plans he has for a bypass of the town.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Traffic arrangements in Tavistock are for the Devon county council. If the county council put forward proposals for a bypass, consideration would be given to their eligibility for transport supplementary grant.

Sir Peter Mills: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that there are growing problems on the route between Plymouth, Tavistock, Hatherleigh and the north? Given the increase in the number of heavy lorries and the container port at Plymouth, Tavistock and Hatherleigh will need proper bypasses. Will my hon. Friend accept that I do not want to have to wait 15 years, as I had to in the case of the Okehampton bypass, for those two bypasses?

Mr. Bottomley: I appreciate my hon. Friend's point, but he will understand that we are largely in the hands of Devon county council.

Transport Act 1985

10. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met representatives of shire and metropolitan counties to discuss the impact of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met representatives of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities on 16 January. I have met various representatives of both shire and metropolitan counties at a series of seminars organised by the Bus and Coach Council earlier this year.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not true that deregulation, cuts in transport supplementary grant and cuts in bus grant have reduced the national demand for buses from 5,800 in 1980 to 2,400 in 1985? Is that not the real reason for the question mark over the bus plants at Lowestoft, Preston and Workington?

Mr. Mitchell: No, Sir. The hon. Gentleman deplores the phasing out of bus grant, but it was announced by the Labour Government in 1977, and it fell to this Government to carry out that intention. Thus, the hon. Gentleman can hardly blame this Government for carrying out a decision that was announced by their Labour predecessors. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the demand for buses, but there is very substantial demand for many smaller buses. Indeed, I hope that British industry will gear itself up to manufacturing what the market requires.

Mr. Haywood: Is the Minister aware that minibuses have started operating in Avon? Is he further aware that in my constituency the 16 and 15-seaters are immensely popular and are serving parts of my constituency which have never before had a bus service? Is that not a reflection of the competition provided by the Devon General Bus Company?

Mr. Mitchell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that illustration, to which I could add many others. The Exeter experiment is well known. Not only has it increased the availability of bus services; it has increased the number of jobs for bus drivers. The scheme is so successful that the Devon General Bus Company is extending it to Torquay, where it is warmly welcomed.

Mr. Stephen Ross: Is the Minister aware that the 15,000 registrations relate mainly to the urban routes and that in the rural areas the outlook is grim? When he discusses these matters with the shire counties, will he remember that finances are inadequate to subsidise the rural routes when the time comes in the autumn? What does he intend to do about that?

Mr. Mitchell: In some rural areas, such as Devon, a high proportion of the routes have already been registered, so that it does not necessarily follow that there will be less registration in the rural areas. Substantial funds are available for contract services to be provided in the rural areas. One would expect the counties to use that substantial sum — nearly £100 million for the shire counties—to secure services in such areas. The people there can have the security and certainty of a contract service, and therefore feel safe.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

European Community Budget

49. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Attorney-General if he is satisfied with the preparations which have been made for the hearing of the interim application by the United Kingdom to the European Court of Justice on the expenditure by the Commission of the sums raised in the budget as passed by the European Assembly; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General (Sir Michael Havers): Yes, we expect judgment shortly.

Mr. Taylor: Will the necessary steps be taken to prevent the Commission from spending this money in an illegal budget before the judgment is made? Will the Attorney-General consider recommending to his Government colleagues that an amendment be made to the Single European Act to prevent the European Assembly from making illegal budgets in the future?

The Attorney-General: It was expected that the judgment in the main action would not be delivered until the early part of next year. We now hope that it will be in high summer, and therefore part of the worry expressed by my hon. Friend will be removed. I shall draw the rest of his remarks to the attention of my colleagues.

Mr. Deakins: If we are successful in our application to the court, will we be able to reclaim, and is it our intention to reclaim, the moneys paid over which are outwith the Consolidated Fund?

The Attorney-General: If the moneys have not been spent, we shall, of course, seek to reclaim them.

Mr. John Morris: Is not at least £70 million at stake? Why did Britain wait from December to March before it tried to seek an interim injunction? The Government parade their belief in the rule of law, so why the delay?

The Attorney-General: The sum is £70 million up to the end of March—the end of the financial year. We

have moved as fast as possible, but we have had to consider and consult our colleagues in the Community. They are all on our side in relation to the illegality of the European budget, but only we are prepared—I think properly—to take the initiative of going for an interim judgment.

Peter Cameron Webb Syndicate

50. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Attorney-General when he anticipates charges may be laid with regard to the allegations of fraud in the management of the Peter Cameron Webb Syndicate at Lloyd's.

The Attorney-General: The investigation co-ordinated by the fraud investigation group set up by the Director of Public Prosecutions for that purpose continues to be vigorously pursued. Substantial progress has been made in recent months, but it would not be right for me to discuss the present state of the evidence. Nor do I propose to speculate as to when a decision will be taken about the preferring of charges.

Mr. Stephen Ross: Has the Attorney-General seen the *Daily Mail* of 10 March, which identifies Mr. Peter Dixon of the syndicate, who went off with only a cool £7 million —not £40 million that the other gentleman went off with—and who is now living in Virginia? Are we applying for an extradition order so that he can be brought back to face trial in this country?

The Attorney-General: I hope that we shall be in a position to apply for an extradition order. I must remind the House that the United States is slow in dealing with extradition. First, we must have a case that will satisfy the judges in the United States.

Sir Peter Emery: Will my right hon. and learned Friend bear in mind that many Conservative Members are concerned to ensure that where fraud occurs, especially against small investors, the courts should be able to act as soon as possible to bring the perpetrators to justice? Is he aware that there is great public concern about fraud?

The Attorney-General: I share my hon. Friend's concern. There has been a marked improvement in reducing delays lately. In 1983, 25 serious frauds were committed for trial. In 1984 there were 45 committals, and there were 93 in 1985. There were 150 prosecutions started in 1985 and 55 trials were completed, 42 resulting in conviction, which my hon. Friend will know is well above the average conviction rate. A great many compliments are due to the fraud investigation group for what it is doing.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Attorney-General recall saying to one of his hon. Friends that he found the level of City fraud unacceptable? Is he aware that Peter Dixon was issued with a writ in America a short time ago in respect of a civil action? If it is possible for the civil authorities to serve a writ on that man, who with his partner got away with £39 million according to the investigations which were carried out by Lloyd's, why is it that the Government, the fraud squad and those who act on behalf of the DPP find themselves unable to track down Peter Dixon and carry out what most people regard as British justice? If old-age pensioners can be done for taking a tin of salmon—some of them are locked up for such offences—I am sure that the British people will regard it as less than even-handed treatment when crooks in the City can get away with blue murder.

The Attorney-General: The degree of proof and the testing of it in civil proceedings is different from that in criminal matters. I shall tell the House what is happening. The Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions is heading a squad comprising the assistant director, a professional officer, two detective superintendents and five counsel, two of them being Queen's counsel. All of them have been trained in the process of reinsurance. The difficulty is the tracing of the funds to ultimate beneficiaries. The funds have gone through several countries. Some of the witnesses have been unhelpful, and I am probably using a phrase of understatement in saying that. It is extremely difficult for us to deal with laws abroad on disclosures of confidential information. We have been having difficulties with Switzerland, which in this instance is the most important country, and where the Banque du Rhone is situated. We are doing everything possible to bring to justice those who committed these offences.

Mr. McCrindle: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that whoever or whatever is holding up the pursuit of these prosecutions, Lloyd's is not, contrary to what has often been suggested, one of the responsible parties? On the contrary, Lloyd's is prepared to continue to give every possible assistance in bringing the perpetrators of the frauds to justice.

The Attorney-General: I can confirm that. Lloyd's is giving to the Director all the documents that are relevant, and I am extremely grateful to it. However, the difficulty in obtaining evidence from abroad and the rules of confidentiality make it very difficult to get on as fast as we would like.

Nationalised Industries (Legal Advice)

51. **Mr. Eadie** asked the Attorney-General if he will outline his duties in relation to the giving of legal advice to the boards of nationalised industries; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Nationalised industries are not part of the Crown and my duties do not include giving them legal advice. Each of them can obtain legal advice, whenever necessary, from their own legal advisers, who are independent of the Law Officers and of the Government.

Mr. Eadie: Does the Attorney-General agree that his answer appears to be in conflict with what has been reported in the press? For example, it is well known that the National Coal Board consulted the Attorney-General's Department on whether it was in breach of the law in paying pension credits to mineworkers. We know that it was told that it was in breach of the law not to do so. Why is there secrecy? The Attorney-General's Department seems to be trying to cover up the NCB's deplorable industrial relations department. Will he do something about that? Will he stop his Department being used by the NCB in such a despicable way to deprive miners of their legitimate rights to pension credits?

The Attorney-General: I wish that I could give the hon. Gentleman the advice that I gave, as he would no doubt be delighted. The National Coal Board received two conflicting opinions, so it asked the advice of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. As a result

of that, I advised my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and, with my permission, the NCB was shown my view.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that the issue goes much wider than that? Is he not dismayed that the NCB has ignored decisions of the industrial tribunal process if it does not like them, and also ignores decisions of the colliery review procedure if it does not like them? As a matter of policy, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that that is an unacceptable way for a publicly owned nationalised industry to treat the law?

The Attorney-General: That must surely be a question for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and not for me.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Africa (Aid)

54. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he has made to the United Nations emergency agency for Africa appeal for £460 million, in aid in the current year.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Timothy Raison): During 1986 we shall deliver at least 68,000 tonnes of wheat or wheat equivalent to Ethiopia, Sudan and Mozambique at an approximate cost of £10·7 million, and some £12 million in other aid for relief and rehabilitation. In addition, we shall be meeting our share of the cost of European Community actions, including its substantial food aid provision.

Mr. Beith: In view of the enhanced press interest in overseas development questions, will the Minister tell us the Government's response to the appeal from Mr. Bradford Morse, head of the United Nations development programme, for £460 million additional emergency aid this year in view of the threat to the lives of 11·5 million people in Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique and Sudan? Has there been any special British Government response to that appeal?

Mr. Raison: In fact, there has not been an appeal from Mr. Bradford Morse. He has published estimates of the scale of need. I think that those estimates probably include some development work as well as relief work. I assure the hon. Gentleman and the House, however, that we shall continue as we have done in the past two years to play a very full part in helping to deal with the emergency.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Has not Ethiopia, a major recipient of the aid, been moving population on a scale and with a savagery far exceeding anything known in South Africa? Do the Government intend to raise that matter at the United Nations?

Mr. Raison: We have made our concern about the resettlement policy absolutely clear and we have not supported any programmes involving resettlement.

Mr. Stuart Holland: How can the Minister be sure that money given to the Ethiopian Government or to voluntary agencies working in Ethiopia is not spent on resettlement schemes? Does he share the widespread concern of the House that the schemes are not concerned with moving people for their own welfare and development, but are political manoeuvres to depopulate areas which are contested in law?

Mr. Raison: We always take very great care over the destiny of the resources that we provide. I have had no reports that money provided by us has been used to further resettlement.

55. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he plans to respond further to the all-party parliamentary group report on United Kingdom aid to African agriculture.

Mr. Raison: I answered oral questions on the report on 11 November 1985, and my noble Friend Lord Trefgarne responded fully to a debate on it in another place on 18 December. I am, of course, willing to continue to respond to letters or questions from hon. Members on the report.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Minister accept that the lessening of development aid is one of the reasons why there is such a need for relief aid at times of famine in Africa, and that the advantage of increasing the development aid budget is that there can be the sort of sustained support for African agriculture which gives self-sufficiency through methods such as irrigation schemes, which might reflect much better on the need for voluntary contributions towards relief that we have seen over the past year? The Government were substantially criticised in the report. Will the Minister tell the House that he will do something this year to make British aid to African agriculture much less miserly?

Mr. Raison: We all accept the importance of long-term development as a way of forestalling famine of the kind that we have seen. In fact, the proportion of our bilateral programme that has gone to aid to agriculture has increased and I have recently shown my concern for aid to agriculture by announcing one or two very important additional projects in this area.

Mr. Moynihan: In view of the comments made in the report regarding the Equatoria region agricultural project, will my hon. Friend make a statement to the House regarding the security of the ODA project and the personnel, in view of the civil war in northern Uganda, 18 miles away, the civil war in the southern Sudan and the current isolation of the project from diesel and food supplies?

Mr. Raison: I visited the ERAP project in January of this year. I believe that it is an extremely good project. My hon. Friend is right to say that there is a considerable problem posed to it more immediately by the difficulty of getting fuel which comes out through north Uganda. I hope that the project will continue in being, because it is one which I value, but we shall have to watch what happens carefully.

Mr. Tom Clarke: As the main thrust of the report was to express concern about the percentage that is being spent on agriculture, and even that is not always right, does the Minister agree that the emphasis might be changed in the interests of the peasant food-producing sector?

Mr. Raison: I largely agree with what the hon. Gentleman has said. As I said earlier, I have recently announced one or two further agricultural projects which are designed very much to help the peasant farmer.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

56. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth affairs when he last met the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Raison: I have not yet met the new High Commissioner, Mr. Hocké, since he took up his post. In June 1985 I met the High Commission's Director of External Affairs, Mr. Volfing. We had a wide-ranging discussion of UNHCR's activities, including its financial position. In that regard I am pleased to announce that I have just approved a further £1·05 million for UNHCR's african refugee programmes.

Mr. Cox: I welcome that reply. However, is the Minister aware that the High Commissioner last month sent out urgent appeals for some 1 million people in Africa who are suffering from hunger and lack of proper shelter? May we have an assurance in the House that the Government and our EEC partners will give all the help they can so that we do not see the tragic problems this year that we saw so often last year in the Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia?

Mr. Raison: I accept the importance of what the hon. Gentleman has said. I believe that our record vis á vis UNHCR has been very good. In the current financial year we shall have spent £33 million on refugees, of which £17 million will go through UNHCR.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Does my right hon. Friend agree that some of the most effective work being done on a substantial scale for refugees is being done by the Government of Pakistan to assist the 3 million refugees from Afghanistan? Will the Government give every possible help to the magnificent effort of the Pakistan Government?

Mr. Raison: I agree. I think that the Government of Pakistan have behaved with a great sense of hospitality to the refugees from Afghanistan. We have responded to the appeals for Afghan refugees with considerable generosity and continue to do so.

Mr. Pavitt: In view of the continuing tragedy of Lebanon and the middle east, and the excellent work being done for refugees there, did the Minister, in his discussions, make any extra allocation for that part of the world, where there is constant flux and where, as a result, the administrative problem becomes even more expensive?

Mr. Raison: The form of support for refugees in the middle east is the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, which is not covered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

India (Aid)

57. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Commonwealth and Foreign Affairs what plans he has for the provision of aid to India during the years 1986, 1987 and 1988, respectively; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: British aid is planned on a financial year basis. In 1986-87 we plan to spend about £108 million on bilateral aid to India, and at least £11 million more from the aid and trade provision. Figures are not available for subsequent years.

Mr. Janner: Is the Minister aware that some of us feel that that sum is totally inadequate to meet the vastness of the need and suffering in India? Now that, happily, the Indian aspect of Westland's affairs has been settled, what plans are there for discussions with the Indian Government in the immediate future regarding further needs and projects?

Mr. Raison: I share the view of the hon. and learned Gentleman that the signature of the Westland agreement is very much to be welcomed, from the Indian point of view, and of course from the point of view of the employees of Westland in this country. However, the hon. and learned Gentleman is wrong to suggest that our aid programme to India is inadequate. It is a very large aid programme. In my view it is extremely well constructed, and I believe that the Indians much appreciate it. We discuss regularly the composition of that programme.

Mr. Jessel: As so much of our EEC aid goes to Africa, is it not right that it should be balanced by our bilateral aid being concentrated largely on India?

Mr. Raison: Our bilateral aid goes to Africa in large quantities as well, but, as I have just said, we have a large bilateral programme to India. I am sure that it is absolutely right that we should.

Aid (Conservation Strategy)

58. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to ensure that the overseas development programme is guided by the principles of the world conservation strategy.

Mr. Raison: We have adopted principles that are in harmony with those of the world conservation strategy. They are contained in guidance notes and checklists that are issued to Overseas Development Administration staff.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Surely the Minister accepts that soil erosion and deforestation are crucial issues, particularly in Africa. If that is so, why have the Land Resources Development Centre and the Tropical Development Research Institute been starved of resources, and why have they less manpower than before?

Mr. Raison: Those issues are very important, but the fact is that the TDRI and the LRDC are very well equipped to carry on the outstanding work that they have been doing for several years.

Tercentenary of Bill of Rights

3.31 pm

Mr. Speaker: In 1988 we will be celebrating the tercentenary of the "Glorious — or bloodless — revolution", and the Bill of Rights. Those were the foundations from which evolved, peacefully, the system of parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarch which we enjoy today, and which has inspired the constitutions of many other countries of the world.

Parliament itself will wish to take a lead with an appropriate celebration to mark that anniversary. The Lord Chancellor and I are therefore appointing today a small Committee of Members of both Houses to advise us on the form of those celebrations, and to oversee the arrangements to be made.

I am also happy to say that the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Leaders of other parties in this House have indicated their full support for these proposals and have agreed to become patrons of the project.

The following Members have kindly agreed to serve on the advisory committee:

The right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym), as chairman, the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow), the hon. Member for Monmouth (Sir J. Stradling Thomas), the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack).

I have asked Mr. Michael Ryle, Clerk of the Journals, to serve as the Commons secretary of the Committee.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As a lover of our monarchy, our Parliament and our institutions, I was most interested to hear about the proposal for 1688 to be remembered and for the setting up of the Committee. Will you please make sure, when the Committee deliberates, that the Whig dogs do not get the best of it?

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that that will be a matter for me. It will be a matter for the Committee.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I draw your attention and that of the House to the fact that the next Parliament to be elected, which will be no later than the same year, 1988, will be the 50th Parliament of the United Kingdom and might also merit an appropriate commemoration?

Mr. Speaker: It will depend on when those celebrations will take place. Perhaps we will be able to commemorate both events.

3.33 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does it arise from questions?

Mr. Leigh: I have given you notice of my point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is this an appropriate time to ask for your ruling?

Mr. Speaker: I shall take points of order after hearing applications under Standing Order No. 10.

British Airways (Privatisation)

3.34 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the privatisation of British Airways."

The matter is specific because, despite last week's written reply, it is understood that the chairman of British Airways is today seeing the Prime Minister to urge a management buy-out in apparent defiance of the decision of the Secretary of State for Transport.

The matter is important because these decisions should be taken by the House, not over expensive lunches at the Savoy hotel by most of the members of the 1922 Committee. It is urgent because the future of the world's largest airline is being seriously affected by the uncertainties surrounding its prospects and the open and public disagreement between its chairman and his sponsoring Minister, the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration namely,

"the privatisation of British Airways."

I listened carefully to the hon. Member, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Newspaper Dispute (Scotland)

3.36 pm

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent examination, namely,

"the dispute affecting the *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail*."

The dispute affects Scotland's highest selling daily newspaper and the production of its sister newspaper, the *Sunday Mail*. The two newspapers are not affected by the general Fleet street crisis. The papers are printed in an up-to-date plant using modern technology. In 1986 their profits will approach £7 million. Their circulations are large and growing, with the *Daily Record* selling more than 750,000 copies daily.

Because of the disruptive management by Mr. Robert Maxwell, who seeks to destroy the Scottish identity of the *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail*, the future of those newspapers is in dispute. The Scottish community is up in arms about the matter. As there is no tradition of militancy involved in the production of these newspapers, as the dispute is continuing and as there are no signs that the parties will come together, I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to consider my application seriously.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the dispute affecting the *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail*.

I am afraid that I must give the hon. Member the same answer as I gave to the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape). I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Huddersfield Polytechnic School of Architecture

3.38 pm

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent attention, namely,

"the proposed closure of the Huddersfield polytechnic school of architecture."

My request is specific, because it relates to an announcement of closure that was made public only last Saturday. It is important, because closure will dramatically affect the ability of the Yorkshire and Humberside region to supply skilled architectural staff to rebuild and reconstruct the ravaged infrastructure of our region. The matter is urgent because the late date at which the Secretary of State for Education and Science has made the announcement will seriously impair the recruitment drive for this September's courses. It will dramatically affect the school of architecture, which places 100 per cent. of its students in employment. The school is renowned for the quality of its department and the modern methods that it has pioneered.

Above all, I hope that my application will be successful because it will allow me and my Yorkshire colleagues to express at greater length our horror and the frustration and anger in the region at the proposed closure. A debate would give us an opportunity to consider this incomprehensible decision and the grounds on which it has been made.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the proposed closure of the Huddersfield polytechnic school of architecture."

As the hon. Member knows, my sole duty in considering an application under Standing Order No. 10 is to decide whether it should be given priority over the business already set down for consideration this evening or tomorrow. I regret that I do not consider that the matters that he has raised meet all the criteria laid down in the Standing Order and, therefore, I am not able to submit his application to the House.

Privilege

3.40 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point of order, of which I have given prior notice, relates to the use and possible abuse of parliamentary privilege. I seek advice and a ruling on a particular instance.

It is with considerable hesitation and regret that I raise this matter, because it refers to a Conservative Member —the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) — who on Thursday 13 March tabled a question to the Attorney-General asking him whether he would now prosecute a doctor in my constituency in respect of a rape offence. The man was named.

At the outset, I must stress that it is not for me to comment on the man's guilt or innocence. I am content to let the law take its course. However, I feel that at best it is a breach of parliamentary convention — and possibly an abuse of parliamentary privilege — to name an individual in this way. This is a double abuse, as it is not permissible to name an accused before he is charged, and in rape cases the accused cannot be named unless found guilty.

Like other hon. Members, I wish to see all criminals, particularly rapists, and especially child abusers, brought to justice. If any hon. Member feels that the police are not being diligent or that individuals are being protected, it is right and proper that questions should be put to the Attorney-General so that he may investigate further. The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth would have been doing a public service had he put his question and omitted the name, but by putting the name into the question he is now denying justice.

The full details of this case are more complex than those that have come out in the newspapers, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. St. John-Stevas) may well know. The man cannot defend himself without giving more details, which would almost certainly identify the rape victim. In the absence of his defence, he is being found guilty by parliamentary privilege and newspaper headlines, and he now struggles to try to prove his innocence. This is quite contrary to English law, and led to some of the outrageous comments that we had from hon. Members last Friday.

If the police have sufficient evidence against this man, he should be brought to trial. But can he now have a fair trial? I wish to make it clear again that I am not attempting to defend this man. It is not for me to judge his guilt or innocence, nor is it the duty of this Parliament, nor any Member of this Parliament, to do just that. However, I ask whether justice is being done at the present time. Can it be obtained in the future if a trial should take place? Is parliamentary privilege being abused, and if so, how can it be stopped? I seek your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the right hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. St. John-Stevas) wishes to raise a point of order on the same matter, I shall call him first.

Mr. Norman St. John-Stevas (Chelmsford): I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker. Further to the point of order so lucidly put by my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), may I point out that this tragic case of the rape of a child took place in my constituency and that the child is the daughter of one of my constituents — [Hon. Members: "Alleged rape."] The alleged rape. In fact, the police have indicated that in their opinion a rape has taken place, but there is doubt as to who was responsible for it.

Is it not one of the strongest conventions of this House that constituency cases are taken up by the Member of Parliament concerned? Yet there was no consultation or information given and nothing was said to me by my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) before he tabled his question. Should there not be some protection for hon. Members in these cases?

I had taken up the case with the local police and the Director of Public Prosecutions, and their legal, impartial opinion was that the prosecution could not succeed and so should not take place. May we have some protection and guidance on that crucial point? Do you agree that the higher the privilege, the greater the sense of responsibility with which it should be used?

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware that the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) has also made allegations about a constituent of mine in north Humberside. He did so without consulting me, without reference to me, and without any discussion with me. If a matter concerning a constituent is to be raised, it is a matter of courtesy to refer it to the hon. Member in whose constituency that person resides. If that hon. Member then takes no action, another hon. Member may feel free to act in the interests of justice.

Both the alleged perpetrator of the crime and the victim happen to live in my constituency, yet at no time did the hon. Gentleman refer the matter to me. As a result of the statement being made, the press have camped out at a church in my constituency. Everybody knows who is involved in the case. The result is that a person is being tried by the media and would have been subject to a form of parliamentary lynch-law by the hon. Gentleman had he been able to speak during questions earlier. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) for the succinct way in which he asked his supplementary question.

Apart from the courtesies of the House, the matter should be referred to the Committee of Privileges because it involves the freedom, honesty and dignity of individual constituents who, no matter what they are accused of, are entitled to a free, fair and unbiased trial, which at present they are not getting.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Paragraph 3, entitled "Personal reflections" on page 338 of "Erskine May" states:

"It is not in order in a question to reflect on the character or conduct of those persons whose conduct may only be challenged on a substantive motion. . . nor is it permissible to reflect on the conduct of other persons otherwise than in their official or public capacity. Moreover, a question introducing names (whether of persons or of bodies) invidiously or for advertisement or in any way not strictly necessary to render the question intelligible is not in order."

You may rule, Mr. Speaker, that the paragraph does not cover the conduct of my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens). However, it is in your power to set a precedent, by which if, in a similar case, an hon. Member wishes to name a person who is accused but not yet charged, he should do so on the

Floor of the House by reference to a letter that he has sent to the Attorney-General, in which he can mention the name of the accused. Surely it is a principle of our country that a person is innocent until proven guilty, and it is a principle of the House—this is in our sub judice rules—that we should not supplant the role of the courts of the realm as my hon. Friend has done.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take one more point of order, then I shall allow the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) to have a word.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): I wish, Mr. Speaker, to submit one further point in support of the submissions that have been made. Any hon. Member who is genuinely interested in bringing someone to justice has a perfectly easy remedy, which is to seek a private meeting with a Law Officer. Law Officers are always prepared to see hon. Members at short notice to discuss a matter and then, through the Director of Public Prosecutions, to ask the police to make the necessary inquiries. If there is insufficient legally admissible evidence in the opinion of counsel advising the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General will tell the hon. Member. Many years ago I sought the advice of the Law Officers when a local chief constable refused to prosecute. As a result of a meeting with officials in the Law Officer's Department, the local chief constable prosecuted the case, the defendant was tried, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment.

There is a discreet and realistic way of dealing with such matters, and I support the applications that are being made to consider this a breach of privilege.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): It is five years since I named someone in the House of Commons, and it was a distasteful thing to have to do. I wish to be helpful. You will appreciate Mr. Speaker, that during the past five years letters have flowed to me containing allegations and details of cases that I should look into and demanding that I name various people, some very important. I always sent the files to the Home Office, which investigated the cases for me, and in many cases to the chief constables concerned. Therefore, I was jealously guarding, not misusing, parliamentary privilege.

When I was elected to the House, I thought that I could come here and speak without fear or favour on my constituency's problems and on matters of national importance, as child abuse and child protection are. My difficulty is that people offend against children in privacy, by and large, without an audience. We are in some difficulty when the victims are little children and where the courts cannot prosecute unless there is corroboration.

May I conclude, because I see that hon. Members are getting restless, by saying that children are being abused, but that such cases do not come to court because the Director of Public Prosecutions decided otherwise. I unreservedly apologise to the hon. Members who have criticised me, but I say to each of them that I have been fighting a national crusade to protect little children. I do not intend to slip in any names now, but I advise the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) that a man in his constituency is abusing children. I have named him in a question——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me deal with this matter. I am grateful to hon. Members for giving me notice that they intended to raise the matter on points of order. The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) is correct. "Erskine May" makes it clear on page 338 that the invidious use of a person's name in a question should be resorted to only if to do so is strictly necessary to render the question intelligible. I commend to hon. Members the device in appropriate cases of supplying the relevant Minister privately with the name of an individual who is the subject of a question, and I hope that wherever possible hon. Members will use that method of avoiding unnecessarily damaging references to individuals. I thank the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Ryman) for raising that point.

Freedom of speech is essential to the work of Parliament. It is the responsibility of every individual Member to ensure that he uses his freedom in a way that does not needlessly damage those who do not enjoy that privilege and in a way that does not damage the good name of the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have made a statement and a ruling. I do not think anything else can arise.

Mr. McNamara: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. This arises from what the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth said. I am grateful for your ruling, which the House heard with respect, and which I appreciate greatly. The hon. Gentleman said that he would not slip in any names, but he has already named my constituent in a question. May I take it that if a written question has been tabled today, the Clerks will ensure that it is altered to make sure that that man's name is not shown?

Mr. Speaker: I have no knowledge of any question, but the House may be certain that I shall look carefully at any such question if one is tabled.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): On one point, Mr. Speaker, I raise a point of order. So that no one should be misled, would it not be as well to add that following the Strauss case any such communication between a Member and a Law Officer is not subject to privilege?

Mr. Speaker: That is correct.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. Gentleman's question directly involved with this matter?

Mr. Foulkes: It follows from your ruling, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) said that he had tabled a question. Can you confirm that if he does not withdraw it he will be in contempt of the ruling that you have just given?

Mr. Speaker: I understand that the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth has submitted a question, but it has not yet been accepted. I shall look carefully at it.

OUTER SPACE BILL *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Outer Space Bill *[Lords]* be referred to a Second Reading Committee.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton].*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &C.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House I shall put together the two Questions on Statutory Instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Professions Supplementary to Medicine (Winding up of Remedial Gymnasts) Board Order of Council 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Local Authority Grants (Termination) (Scotland) Order 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Gas Bill (Allocation of Time)

Ordered,

That the Report [12th March] from the Business Committee be now considered,—*[Mr. Biffen.]*

Report considered accordingly.

Question, That this House doth agree with the Committee in its Resolution, *put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 45 (Business Committee) and agreed to.*

Following is the report of the Business Committee:

That the allotted days which under the Order [17th February] are to be given to the proceedings on Consideration and Third Reading shall be allotted in the manner shown in the Table set out below and, subject to the provisions of that Order, each part of those proceedings shall be brought to a conclusion at the time specified in the third column of that Table.

TABLE

Allotted days	*Proceedings*	*Time for Conclusion of Proceedings*
First day	New Clauses	8.30 pm
	Remaining proceedings on Consideration	Midnight
Second day	Third Reading	7 pm

Orders of the Day

Gas Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New clause 8

POWER OF COUNCIL TO INVESTIGATE OTHER MATTERS

'(1) The Council shall have power to investigate any matter (not being a matter which it is its duty to investigate under section 32 above) which—

(a) appears to it to be a matter to which subsection (2) below applies and not to be an enforcement matter within the meaning of that section; and

(b) is the subject of a representation (other than one appearing to the Council to be frivolous) made to the Council by or on behalf of a person appearing to the Council to have an interest in that matter.

(2) This subsection applies to—

(a) any matter relating to the design, manufacture, importation or supply (whether by sale, hire or loan or otherwise) of gas fittings used or intended to be used by persons supplied with gas by public gas suppliers;

(b) any matter relating to the installation, maintenance or inspection of gas fittings used or intended to be used by such persons; and

(c) any other matter relating to, or to anything connected with, the use by such persons of gas supplied by such a supplier or the use of such fittings.

(3) Where the Council has investigated any matter under this section, it may prepare a report on that matter and (subject to section 41 below) shall send a copy of any such report to such (if any) for the following persons as it thinks appropriate, that is to say—

(a) any person to whom the report refers or who (whether or not he has made a representation to the Council) appears to the Council to have an interest in the matter to which the report relates;

(b) the Director General of Fair Trading or any person whose functions under any enactment appear to the Council to be exercisable in relation to that matter;

(c) any person who appears to the Council to be a person who ought to take account of the report in determining how to act in relation to that matter;

but nothing in this subsection shall require the Council to send any such copy to the Director.'.—*[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

3.57 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following:

New Clause 6

GAS CONSUMERS COUNCIL (LOCAL REPRESENTATION)

(1) It shall be the duty of the Gas Consumer's Council to appoint in accordance with a scheme under this section individuals to be local representatives of the Council.

(2) It shall be the duty of such individuals representing the Council in any locality:

(a) to be available for receiving on behalf of the Council representations from consumers or prospective consumers of gas in the locality;

(b) to consider and investigate any matter which appears to affect the interests of gas consumers or prospective gas consumers;

(c) where action appears to be requisite as to any matter referred to in paragraph *(b)* above to make representations to the Council; and

(d) where action appears to the Council to be requisite as to any functions assigned to it by this part to assist the Council in making representations to achieve that action in any way in which the Council deems appropriate.

(3) The scheme shall be prepared by the Gas Consumers' Council within a period of twelve months beginning with the appointed day.

(4) The scheme shall have regard to the individual requirements and circumstances of the different regions and areas of Great Britain with, in the first instance, specific arrangements appropriate to each of the marketing regions of the "successor company" (interpretation as in section 64 of the Bill). Insofar as it fixes the number of local representatives to be appointed the scheme:

(a) shall come into force on being approved by the Secretary of State

(b) may be varied from time to time and if the variation affects the number of local representatives, such variation shall require the approval of the Secretary of State.'.

Government amendments Nos. 16 to 18.

Amendment No. 20, in clause 33, page 37, line 8, at end insert

'and any matter relating to the manufacture importation, supply, installation and maintenance of gas fittings'.

Government amendments Nos. 22 to 25, 39 and 40.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: As hon. Members who participated in the debates on the Bill either on Second Reading or in Committee realise, a major priority of the legislation must be to ensure that the interests of all gas consumers are fully protected. When I say all gas consumers, I mean of course not only domestic gas consumers, but industrial and commercial consumers. These categories were covered in the original Bill, but because of the system of regulation that was being set up, with the power to appoint a Director General of Gas Supply, the powers of the new Gas Consumers Council were directly related to tariff consumers and also to the relationship that they have with the Director General of Gas Supply.

This would not, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State explained on Second Reading, inhibit the council, once it had been set up, from acting on behalf of all consumers, not just tariff consumers. None the less, having listened to the lengthy debates in Committee on the important issue of the interests of gas consumers, my right hon. Friend and I are concerned by the views that have been expressed in the House both on Second Reading and in Standing Committee.

The powers relating to the role of the Gas Consumers Council are specifically set out in the Bill. This means that there should be no doubt about the responsibilities of the council. I have had full consultations with Miss Sheila Black, the chairman-designate of the new Gas Consumers Council, who made it plain to me that she and her colleagues on the old council would like these powers to be fully and clearly set out in the legislation.

That is the background to new clause 8. The Bill already lays a duty on the council to investigate complaints concerning the supply of gas. However, the new clause puts the new council's remit into statutory form. It provides the new council with power to investigate any complaints from gas consumers about all relevant matters concerning the sale, installation, use and maintenance of gas appliances and fittings, whether they are in use in people's homes, or whether they are for sale in shops and intended for use. The council will also have the power to investigate any other matters associated with the use of gas

[Mr. Buchanan-Smith]

or gas fittings. In particular, it will have the power to investigate safety matters. All those who participated in the debates on the Bill believe, as do the Government, that this is of paramount importance. The new clause seeks to set out precisely what the Gas Consumers Council can do to enforce safety.

These powers are not in themselves adequate unless the council is able to follow up its investigations in whatever way it feels is appropriate, given its wide remit. It is important that the council should have the power to take follow-up action when it has investigated a complaint. Therefore, the new clause provides the council with the power to pass on any of the findings of British Gas or of any other supplier to the Director General of Fair Trading, the Health and Safety Executive, the complainant, or any other person or organisation that has an interest in the matter.

I hope that the new clause meets the wishes of the House and fulfils in statutory form the Government's intentions relating to the powers of the Gas Consumers Council and the points that have been made in our debates. The new clause has been warmly welcomed by Miss Sheila Black, the chairman-designate of the Gas Consumers Council. She wanted these powers to be fully spelt out. I hope that the House will accept that the new clause fulfils those objectives.

Amendments Nos. 16, 17 and 18 are required to achieve consistency in the extent to which the new Gas Consumers Council receives copies of documents. The Government have accepted an important amendment in Committee. It provides that the council is to receive copies of the annual report of the Director General of Fair Trading. Having accepted the amendment, the Government looked carefully into the matter to see whether the amendment needed to be extended to include other documents. I hope that the House agrees that it is right and proper that the council should be made fuily aware of any proposals relating to a modification of the authorisation.

Amendments Nos. 22, 23 and 25 are consequential upon the new clause, if introduced. They extend the statutory remit of the new Gas Consumers Council to cover all complaints from gas consumers. The amendment will allow the council to pass on, without the normal confidentiality restrictions that are povided for in clause 41, relevant information that is gained in the course of its investigation of complaints. It will be able to give full information to the Health and Safety Executive and to Ministers and trading standards officers for the purposes of the consumer protection and consumer safety Acts. This will ensure that matters relating to the safety and standards of gas appliances can be drawn to the attention of the proper authorities.

Amendments Nos. 39 and 40 enable the Secretary of State for Energy—in practice, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—to be involved in setting the terms and conditions of employment of staff of the Gas Consumers Council. As drafted, paragraph 3 of schedule 2 requires these terms and conditions to be approved only by the Treasury. The amendments retain this requirement, but add to it the need for the approval of the Secretary of State. This is a sensible extension of the requirement, because the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry should be involved in this matter. He can bring to bear his experience of other consumer bodies.

As new clause 8 and its associated amendments are of interest to the House, they will probably form a substantial part of our Report stage debate. We have put into statutory form a substantial number of the matters that were discussed in Committee. However, I emphasise again that, as originally drafted, the Bill would not have inhibited the Gas Consumers Council from doing any of the things that we are now seeking to set out in statutory form.

As I said earlier, I hope that the new clause and its associated amendments meet the wishes of the House. The Gas Consumers Council will be able to act with complete confidence, knowing that its powers are provided for in the Bill, and investigate all complaints—not just those of tariff consumers—and deal with all matters relating to appliances, fittings and installations. I commend new clause 8 and its associated amendments to the House.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): I wish to deal first with new clause 6, but before I do so, I should like to comment on what the Minister of State has just said about new clause 8. I agree that it takes into account some of the points that were raised in Committee, but may I direct his attention to paragraphs *(b)* and *(c)* of subsection (3). The last two lines of new clause 8 say:

"but nothing in this subsection shall require the Council to send any such copy to the Director."

That is unsatisfactory. The Director General of Fair Trading will not have the power to make references. Furthermore, he will not receive copies of complaints. We are dealing not just with competition but, as the Minister of State said, with wider aspects relating to the powers of the Gas Consumers Council.

The Opposition's new clause 6 deals with representations to local representatives of the Gas Consumers Council. This matter was debated in detail in Committee, but the Government have not seen fit to take into account the representations that were made then. Therefore, the Opposition have decided to put them before the House at Report stage.

The Minister referred to the chairman-designate of the Gas Consumers Council, Miss Sheila Black, but we are indebted to the South-Western Gas Consumers Council, which has submitted a great deal of evidence to the Committee and to hon. Members on both sides of the House. Clause 2 refers in only the vaguest terms to the Secretary of State when it says that he

"shall have regard to the desirability of having members who are familiar with the special requirements and circumstances of different regions and areas in Great Britain"

when appointing members to the new Gas Consumers Council.

In Committee, the Under-Secretary told us that it was intended that the new Gas Consumers Council would have the powers to set up an advice structure on the various industrial and consumer interests in any area or to ensure that widely scattered consumers are adequately represented. However, that seems entirely to depend on the discretion of the future chairmen of the new Gas Consumers Council. The view of the recently appointed chairman of the new Gas Consumers Council, as expressed in her evidence to the Select Committee, is that local representation, certainly in its present form and extent, does not carry out a vital function. We contest that because our information is that over the years regional bodies of

the Gas Consumers Council, perhaps not with great publicity—we have learnt more about this since the Bill — have carried out a great deal of important investigative work and have played a major part in monitoring a major publicly owned industry. I do not need to remind the House that this will be a major privately owned monopoly. The circumstances do not change.

Local representation is vital and a duty needs to be placed on the GCC rather than just on the chairman to draw up and maintain a scheme of local representation. When, as I have pointed out, the industry is transferred from public ownership into a private monopoly, the same consumer interests will remain. Therefore, they need adequate representation.

Among the main functions of local representatives is, first, troubleshooting. Customers who have complained against British Gas ask local members to take up individual problems which they have not been able to sort out themselves in, for instance, the south-western region. The same applies to Wales, Scotland, the north-west and every other region in the United Kingdom. They represent them in finding a way through the bureaucracy of the monopoly. They deal with straightforward problems by personal contact or telephone, thus preventing long written reports, and pass on to the Gas Consumers Council those cases which need a more detailed analysis or assessment. Those are important areas in which the Gas Consumers Councils act and they will be denied such opportunities when that regional representation is taken away from them. That is the vital factor.

Therefore, new clause 6 takes into account the need expressed by the Under-Secretary in Committee to maintain flexibility in the new arrangements. The proposed new clause does not take away flexibility. It makes the use of that flexibility subject to a broader base of discretion than the whim of an unknown future chairman of the Gas Consumers Council. In effect, it transfers from the regional gas consumers councils, based on the Gas Act 1972, section 11, to the new Gas Consumers Council the duty to draw up and maintain a scheme for local representation. However, in the requirement to have the Secretary of State's approval to the numbers in the scheme, the residual right of appeal by any regional interest group is left, should it be felt that any future proposal to dismantle, reduce, or alter the scheme set up by the new Gas Consumers Council is not justified. It widens the base of the responsibility for exercising the discretion to the Gas Consumers Council and the Secretary of State rather than leaving it to the apparent discretion of one particular person, however good that person might be, to which I have already referred. The provision relating to numbers also exists in the Gas Act 1972. Nevertheless, the new clause allows flexibility to change those arrangements without altering the prime legislation as appropriate.

4.15 pm

That is the basis of new clause 6 and I have made the case for its adoption. In effect, we are trying to put back what the Government are taking out of current legislation. I have also pointed out the weaknesses of new clause 8 and perhaps, when he replies, the Minister will deal with my points on subsection (3)*(b)* and *(c)* because we are extremely concerned about the fact that any reference to the director is removed from the new clause.

I understand that it is not possible at this stage to move new clause 6 but that will be our intention at the appropriate time.

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister of State on introducing this important new clause, into which he and his Department have put a great deal of effort. It allows one or two of his hon. Friends to start the proceedings on Report in a rather more harmonious way than might be the case later when some of the amendments put down by the members of the Select Committee come up for debate. Nevertheless, it is gratifying to see that the Government have responded in full measure to the large numbers of representations that some of us have had from the consumer organisations. Indeed, I understand that they are pleased with the new clause.

It is also pleasing to see that the Government have responded so adequately to the amendment put down by my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) in Committee. Unfortunately, he has to be absent for the moment this afternoon, but I know that he initiated the prodding of the Government in order to ensure that the legislation provided a little more adequate protection for the consumer by putting a few more teeth behind the consumer organisations. That my right hon. Friend has done and in doing so he has also responded magnanimously to the Select Committee's recommendations. We also received a great deal of evidence from consumer organisations suggesting that the procedures to protect consumers in the legislation needed stiffening up a bit, and that my right hon. Friend has done.

We are pleased to say that he has also made reference to the funding of the consumer organisation. The Select Committee was concerned as to whether resources would be adequate to do the job properly. However, my right hon. Friend has given the Select Committee the assurance that whatever resources are needed to do the job properly will be provided. Thus, from all points of view the new clause is most satisfactory, and I am happy to wish it well.

Mr. Michael Cocks (Bristol, South): I am pleased to speak to this group of new clauses and amendments because, since the termination of the Committee stage, I have received a letter from the Under-Secretary of State covering two safety points that I raised. I thank him for his helpful letter.

My first point concerns gas cookers. The situation will probably improve substantially, but it still needs to be watched carefully.

More consideration should be given to open flue heaters. I may be raising detailed points, but they will be important when the Government's massive legislation is implemented. Open flue heaters have received some publicity already. In his letter the Under-Secretary of State wrote:

"the heater in question is now obsolete and it is likely that only a few old properties remain."

I have made some inquiries, and I believe that until recently there were about 10,000 such heaters in the south-west region alone. The number has now been reduced to about 8,000. About half of them are in the Bristol area, as they tend to be concentrated in inner city multi-occupation accommodation. Yet the south-west is only one area, and the problem is probably still larger than the Under-Secretary of State would have us believe. Thus, the situation needs to be monitored carefully.

[Mr. Michael Cocks]

The Under-Secretary of State also said in his letter that anybody who had this sort of heater should have it checked by a competent gas installer, which brings me to my next point, because it is expected that as a result of privatisation there will be some touting for business. Two of my constituents recently drew my attention to a reply-paid card advertising something called "South West Services". One of my constituents works for the South-West gas board and says that, to the casual observer, the logo is not dissimilar from that used by the board. Moreover, there is a freepost address in Keynsham, Bristol. Keynsham is the headquarters of the South-West gas board, and my constituent feels that the material is so similar to that sent out by the board that someone might well think that it comes from that official source. Moreover, the service is based in Stokes Croft, and there is no indication whether the people concerned are properly registered suppliers. Perhaps the Under-Secretary of State will look into that. I should be happy to give him the details if they would be of any help.

We welcome the Government's move towards the point that we made in Committee, but there is still much to done to locate defective appliances. Even at this late stage I ask the Under-Secretary of State to consider asking the successor authorities to institute some sort of census of appliances that may be defective, even if it means putting a question on the part of the gas account that is returned with the bill.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): We must welcome the fact that the Government have apparently, at this late stage, seen the light and the necessity to strengthen consumers' rights. Throughout the Committee stage we argued that consumers' rights were not properly enshrined in the Bill. We believe that their position is being severely weakened through the watering-down of the regional consumer councils. Access to advice and information is vital, especially for those with fuel debt problems, and we believe that that access will be reduced. The abolition of the metropolitan counties and the GLC will also put at risk citizens advice bureaux, which deal with thousands of fuel problem cases. As drafted, the Bill yet again weakens the consumers' position.

Given the huge, powerful and wealthy monopoly that will lie in private hands, it is important that the rights of consumers should be strengthened. It is vital that they should have strong statutory protection. Thus, I welcome the Government's new clause. Throughout the Committee stage we expressed our concern and said that there should be regional offices which were adequately staffed with efficient and experienced personnel in each British Gas region. Given the tight budget, it seems unlikely that such offices will be adequately staffed. I hope that the Minister can give us an assurance on that point.

There is obviously a need for complaints to be handled at regional level. It is essential that there should be regional complaints offices, with adequate staffing, which come under the overall management of the national body. It worries us that the scale of the proposed budget will not allow for some essential consumer services.

In Committee the Minister told us that the funding of the Gas Consumers Council was to be demand-led. He said:

"There is no intention to introduce a cost-cutting exercise because the function of the Gas Consumers Council must be demand led and not financially constructive to enable it to carry out its reasonable functions in the most effective way." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee F;* 21 January 1986, c. 166.]

How is that demand to be decided? Apparently the Department of Trade and Industry is assessing future workloads for the new council and its regional offices in order to discover the demand for staff and to work out the new structure. How much confidence can gas consumers have in the new council if they are told that it cannot deal with their complaints effectively because British Gas will not co-operate or because the council does not have the resources available?

As the Government have tabled this new clause early in the debate, I hope it means that they will support our new clause, which furthers the needs of the consumer, because these needs are clearly not adequately covered by the Bill as drafted.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I shall be brief. I welcome the Government's move and the fact that we have the support of the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) on behalf of the Select Committee. In Committee there was little support from members of the Select Committee, apart from myself.

Can the Minister say whether the consumer has any protection against the right of entry? I have put that question to him before, but I have never had an answer. I believe that a private sector monopoly will be able to decide to enter a person's private home without a magistrate's order. If I am wrong, the Minister will no doubt put me right, but there should be a provision in the Bill to protect the consumer from the threat of the private sector. A subcontractor, or perhaps a cowboy, employed by a gas supplier could take the decision to enter a person's home. The foreman on the site might decide to do that.

I hope the Minister can assure us that under new clause 8 consumers will be protected from a decision to enter their home or private property. Civil liberties are involved, and the people should be protected.

4.30 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The amendments and new clauses are important. I am pleased that the Government have accepted our arguments in Committee and that the surveillance area of the Gas Consumers Council is to be extended under new clause 8. However, those of us who come from the provinces, regions and nations that make up Great Britain regret that the new Gas Consumers Council is to have a centralised complaints role.

The regional gas consumer councils were set up by the 1972 Act and broadly continued the existence of the consultative councils set up in the Gas Act 1948. Herbert Morrison was one of the chief architects of nationalisation. He believed that when the large monopolies were created in the public sector it was important that the industries served the people and that people should have a say in the running of those industries. We argued in Committee that that ethos is even more important in relation to a large private monopoly.

The Government's attitude is typical of the Conservative party. They believe that market forces will decide all things, that British Gas plc's functions will be maintained and general standards levelled as people buy their goods or purchase energy from it. Under the new monopoly people will not have real choices and the normal

market forces will not operate. That is why we want the right representation structure to be established for consumers. Consumers of gas will number almost 20 million by the end of the century and they will have to buy their energy from British Gas plc.

The Government will say that everything is working well now and that after vesting day they will still work well, but it will be a different kettle of fish with the large private monopoly. Clause 2 refers only in the vaguest terms to the Secretary of State having

"regard to the desirability of having members who are familiar with the special requirements and circumstances of different regions and areas in Great Britain"

when appointing members of the new Gas Consumers Council. That is not good enough. We should go much further. During the Standing Committee's sixth sitting the Under-Secretary of State said:

"the new Gas Consumers Council will have the powers to set up an advice structure on the various industrial and consumer interests in any area or to ensure that widely scattered consumers are adequately represented."

I do not know whether the people of Wales or of the north-east and north-west of England regard themselves as "widely scattered consumers". I am sure that they would prefer more formal representation to ensure that by statute they have a right to be involved in the consumer protection aspect of gas.

That representation under the Bill depends on the discretion of the future chairman or chief officer of the new Gas Consumers Council. Miss Sheila Black, the current chairman, expressed her view recently to the Select Committee. She said:

"Local representation in its present form and extent does not carry out a vital function."

We are unsure whether appointments to and developments of the new structure will be left to her discretion.

The Under-Secretary said in Committee that the Government's desire was to maintain flexibility. He said:

"Every word added would be a restriction, and inflexibility would rule." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee F*, 21 January 1986; c. 168.]

That is an example of the woolly thinking and limbo state in which we shall be left as a result of the Bill. The Government just seem to be hoping that things will happen. Because everything has gone marvellously for British Gas in the last 10 years, the Government hope that things will carry on like that. I have less faith in their friends in the City and in private management than they have. The general record in the private sector shows that our views are justified.

The arguments have been well rehearsed in Committee. The Opposition believe that there should be a more structured relationship between the consumer and British Gas plc. We believe that that structure should be enshrined in the Bill.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): I speak briefly in support of new clause 6. We believe that new clause 8 is an improvement to the Bill. It is certainly an improvement on the consumer protection proposals that we debated in Committee. Ministers have said repeatedly that the Bill offers the best deal for consumers and for their protection. We dispute that, but it is futile to pursue that line in the time available.

New clause 6 follows the line that we have pursued in trying to improve the Bill. If the Government are correct in saying that the Bill gives consumers the best deal, that is no reason why we should accept that the Bill is perfect and incapable of further improvement.

New clause 6 deals in particular with the regional aspect. It tries to ensure that regional and district consumer councils are strengthened and preserved. Throughout many hours of debate we have expressed our concern that many people who have given valuable time and experience over many years, representing consumer interests at district and regional level, will be swept away and their expertise will no longer be available. The Bill provides for some regional representation, but it will not be as strong or as efficient as it is at present. We want to improve on the present position.

As I have said on many occasions, there is considerable regional variation. Most consumers will find it easier to contact officials locally and any move towards a system of centralism and the relegation of the regions' importance will be a detrimental step. The proposals that are set out in new clause 6 go some way to redressing the deterioration that would ensue if the Bill were enacted unamended.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The Minister appeared to be resting a large part of his case on the somewhat smug response of the Government after consultation with Miss Black, the chairman of the National Gas Consumers Council. Unfortunately, the response that the Minister has offered the House does not seem to offer any reassurance. New clause 8 does not respond to the needs that were clearly emphasised in our long consideration of these matters in Committee, and we remain entirely dissatisfied and deeply concerned.

I emphasise the argument that has been advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike). We cannot object to the modest progress and the slight change that is being made, but it will still leave a state of affairs that could become entirely and disgracefully unsatisfactory.

The hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost), who contributed to the debate, is a distinguished member of the Select Committee on Energy. He may distance himself slightly from the Government at a later stage, but he seems to be accepting new clause 8 with equanimity. Paragraph 93 of the report of the Select Committee on Energy states:

"The proposed Gas Users' Council must have powers and duties to scrutinise the actions of British Gas in all areas of its operations."

However, the hon. Gentleman represents a Derbyshire constituency which comes within the area of East Midlands gas, which serves my constituency as well, and when the Bill is enacted and implemented there will be only one person to represent the large area of the east midlands. That one person may reside a long way from the hon. Gentleman's constituency, or from mine. Twelve individuals all represent large areas within which there will be, perhaps, millions of consumers. That shows how disgracefully the Government have responded to the Select Committee's recommendations.

Mr. Rost: The hon. Gentleman referred to one paragraph of the Select Committee's report. That paragraph goes on to state that the Gas Consumers Council should have adequate resources to perform its task, which is something that has been conceded by the Government.

[Mr. Rost]

I do not accept that the scrutiny point has not been conceded. A little more centralisation might provide a more effective consumers' organisation.

Mr. Hardy: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not have cause to regret that comment in due course. If he believes that one individual representing millions of consumers, or potential consumers, in the east midlands will be satisfactory, he has a great deal more faith in centralisation than I have.

The hon. Gentleman must consider the argument of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks). We are not talking about slight and unimportant matters. We must bear in mind, as we stressed on many occasions in Committee, that gas is a volatile substance and that there are circumstances in which there could be peril and risk for the consumer. On the grounds of safety and security, it is grossly unsatisfactory to have only one person representing millions of consumers.

4.45 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) shed light on another aspect of this issue when he said that we are giving a great deal of power to a private monopoly. Its representatives will be able to enter private property. It is a serious and strange departure for the Conservative party to confer such powers when it has always stood for the principle of an Englishman's home being his castle. If the Government are giving powers to a private monopoly to operate in such a way, there is even more of a case for the consumer councils to have a proper regional character. Even though the Government have moved slightly in acting on the advice of Miss Black, they have not satisfied those who are concerned that regional cover should be adequate. The Minister may have paid attention to Miss Black and to the Gas Consumers Council, which she represents, but the evidence of the South-Western gas consumers council, which was referred to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South, was probably much more wise and valuable than that from other sources.

Apart from anything else, the new arrangements for local structures could be wiped out at the whim of an individual. There is nothing in the Bill that removes our anxiety about that. We do not believe that the appointment of one person to represent the interests of gas consumers in each of the 12 gas regions will be adequate. A comprehensive network of officers is necessary and they must have adequate resources. It is astonishing that the Government did not adopt that approach when the Bill was introduced. The fact that their conversion has been entirely half-hearted causes us still to be anxious. The fact that they are still reluctant to provide an adequate assurance that the interests of regional consumers will be protected leads us to the view that the Government are far more concerned to please the future shareholders of British Gas than to ensure that consumers' needs are met.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: With the exception of the speech of the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), I began to feel that the Government's new clause was welcomed generally. The hon. Gentleman, in language to which we became accustomed in Committee — for example, he said that he was "entirely dissatisfied" — went a little over the top. In contrast, the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) said that there were certain directions in which he would like to see the Government go further. When the hon. Member for Wentworth reflects on these matters, I think he will appreciate that we have gone a long way towards spelling out in considerable detail the statutory responsibilities of the council. I am delighted that hon. Members on both sides of the House have taken that view, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost), who is an experienced member of the Select Committee on Energy. The Government respected the views of the Select Committee, and I am glad that my hon. Friend feels that its views on these matters have been covered by the new clause.

When we were dealing with new clause 8, I was asked specifically why there was not an obligation to submit a report to the Director General of Gas Supply.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Methyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Surely the director should receive reports.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The hon. Gentleman makes a good suggestion and one that might be acted upon. I should explain to the right hon. Member for Salford, East that the reference to the director has been added for the sake of clarity. There is already fierce competition in the gas appliances and servicing market, and the competitors are not gas suppliers. It is an area in which competition law already applies. The new clause requires the council to refer reports as appropriate to the Director General of Fair Trading, who will be concerned with any anti-competitive practices or monopoly abuse in supply and servicing. That is why we put it in that way, as in tariff matters the National Gas Consumers Council already has a direct role in relation to customers, reporting to the Director General of Gas Supply if it so wishes.

In relation to the other statutory extensions of powers in paragraphs *(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)*, it is made absolutely clear that these are not covered by the director general and that the reports are made to those responsible for those matters. To save the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) intervening at this point, I should make it clear that if the council feels that in any matters covered by those provisions it might be appropriate to inform the director general or if it feels that he should act on an investigation which may have begun in one area and extended into another, nothing in the new clause will prevent the council from informing the director general and the director general from acting on the matter.

The new clause seeks to clarify the functions of the Gas Consumers Council. It is therefore important to make it clear to whom the council is responsible when it has investigated a complaint and wishes to make a report. In the interests of clarity, therefore, the right hon. Member for Salford, East may conclude on reflection that we have got it right.

Mr. Orme: The Minister talks of clarity, but the last two lines of new clause 8 confuse the situation. I cannot see why they are included. What is wrong with the director general being informed even if there are no immediate implications for him or for action by him? He is an important part of the new set-up, together with the Gas Consumers Council and British Gas plc, and each should know what is happening. The new clause concludes:

"but nothing in this subsection shall require the Council to send any such copy to the Director."

We believe that that provision is wrong and should be deleted.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: This brings us back to a fundamental difference between the two sides, which arose many times in Committee. In the area of regulation, in which the director general has strong powers of control, we have sought to make the limits of his responsibility absolutely clear. Spelling this out in relation to the Gas Consumers Council also makes it clear to whom the council is obliged to report. The council is not required to report to the director general, but it is perfectly free to do so if it wishes.

The new clause makes it clear to whom the council should report—for instance, the Director General of Fair Trading—in relation to various matters. We believe that that clarity of responsibility is necessary. The Opposition would like the director general to have a wider role. That is the fundamental difference between us.

Mr. Rowlands: Perhaps I may suggest a more modest reason why the wording is not appropriate. Clause 33(1) refers to the director general's powers to review activities connected with the supply of gas through pipes, including appliances and installation. That being so, under the general review procedures he should at least receive reports from the Gas Consumers Council in relation to complaints.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The director general does not have a role in this area. Clause 33 simply allows him to inform himself about the general activities. Including a direct requirement for the council to report to him under the new clause could lead to confusion as to the person to whom the council is required to report. We have made it absolutely clear who is responsible for following up references by the Gas Consumers Council.

New clause 6, as the right hon. Member for Salford, East made clear, turns on local representation and the local role of the Gas Consumers Council. The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) also referred to this. The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) fears over-centralisation in Gas Consumers Council activities, and the hon. Member for Wentworth made a similar point.

While we were preparing the Bill, the existing National Gas Consumers Council, without any prompting from the Government or the Department, carried out a review of its own activities and the effectiveness with which they could be carried out. As the evidence to the Select Committee by Miss Sheila Black shows, the existing council—not the new body, of which only the chairman-designate has been appointed—felt from its experience of dealing with complaints that the existing statutory system of regional councils was over-rigid and over-structured and did not necessarily achieve the most effective representation of consumers or the most effective protection of their interests.

It was very much in the light of that evidence that, after consultation with colleagues at the Department of Trade and Industry, who are ultimately responsible for consumer matters, we decided that representation and protection of consumer interests would be more effective under the structure that we have proposed, and which I freely admit is more centralised in one sense, although members of the council will be drawn from and represent every region of British Gas. Staff will be appointed in each area and there is power for the council to set up whatever consultation or advisory procedures it thinks appropriate.

It is perhaps an exaggeration to say that no two regions are alike, but there is wide variation from the Scottish region, catering for a wide geographical area with many scattered communities, to North Thames region at the other extreme. What is appropriate for one region may well be inappropriate for another, in view of the entirely different circumstances. The Bill in no way restricts the ability of the new Gas Consumers Council to set up the structure that it believes appropriate in the various regions to satisfy the responsibilities laid upon it by the Bill.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): Having referred to the great variations between, say, Scotland and North Thames, the Minister said that under the Bill it would be for the new Gas Consumers Council to decide what structure was suitable for Scotland and for North Thames. At what stage will the people of Scotland be consulted as to what structure is best for them?

Mr. Buchanan Smith: If the hon. Gentleman had been patient for a moment longer I would have described the consultation procedures which are being undertaken before any final views are taken as to precisely what structure should be set up. There is no question of the Government imposing a structure from the centre, although I emphasise that it is not the responsibility of my right hon. Friend or myself but the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, given his statuory responsibilities for consumer protection. However, I can give the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) the assurance that what is eventually decided will be decided only after full consultation with the existing regional council offices.

5 pm

I have heard no criticism throughout the passage of the Bill of the conduct of the regional councils and of how assiduous they have been in their work of investigating complaints and representing the intersts of consumers in their different areas. It is the existing regional councils and those employed by them whom we are currently consulting. We are also consulting with them in relation to the work that is now being done to set up an organising committee to deal with the new structure. I emphasise to the House, and particularly to the hon. Member for Dundee, East, that a number of existing regional consumers council chairmen are represented on the organising committee. For example, the present chairman of the consumers council in Scotland is a member of that committee. I think that there are concerns in Scotland. I say to the hon. Member for Dundee, East that I have met representatives of the local committee in the Grampian region in the north-east of Scotland in my constituency and I understand their views. I know that they have made their views clear to us. We have urged anybody who has approached us to direct their views to the organising committee through their own regional chairman. Therefore, I believe that there is a scope for local views to be taken into account in setting up what I admit may be a less structured, less rigid, and more flexible arrangement than that which currently exists. We are doing that in response to what the existing National Gas Consumers Council feels is in the best interests of consumers.

One of the questions which I know the council is examining in detail is the precise structure and

[Mr. Buchanan Smith]

organisation of the local representatives that would be appropriate. At this stage, I do not want to pre-empt its deliberations but, as we have repeatedly made clear, there will be staff who will work with the council of representatives appointed from each region to take up complaints at local level and keep in close touch with the views and needs of local consumers. On that point, I am at one with the right hon. Member for Salford, East. I think that it is important that there are grass roots links with consumers. Certainly, our objective is to provide a body that can give speedy and effective help. As I have said, we have been persuaded that the present system has been too rigid and it is for that reason that we are trying to provide a more flexible approach.

I would like to express my thanks to those who have served on the regional gas consumers councils because they have done an extremely good job. They have given much time and effort to dealing with the problems of gas consumers and I am sure that both sides of the House will join in paying tribute to those who, over the years, have served on the councils at local level.

One or two other points were raised during the debate. The right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) raised the question of safety, which we rightly debated at considerable length in Committee, and in my opening remarks today I expressed the importance that we attach to that. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, the installation and maintenance of gas fittings is already covered by the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1984 which are administered by the Health and Safety Executive. In addition, the Department of Trade and Industry has considerable powers under the Consumer Safety Act 1978 in respect of the sale or supply of unsafe goods. Trading standards officers can take action to prevent the sale of any appliance considered unsafe. Those powers are to be reinforced.

I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Bristol, South for raising that matter because it gives me the opportunity to repeat on the Floor of the House what my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary and I said in Committee. The Department of Trade and Industry is hoping to introduce regulations later this year in respect of the sale of gas cookers. I repeat that because I do not want there to be any confusion about the fact that there is already an effective legislative structure to deal with safety in a number of areas.

The right hon. Member for Bristol, South raised the substantial question of appliances which might be dangerous and which were already installed. He said that he would send more details to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and myself. I would be grateful if he would do that and I or my hon. Friend would be happy to respond to him on that point. I think that we are all united on the need to ensure that safety is as effective as we can make it.

The hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) and the hon. Member for Wentworth raised the question of rights of entry. The point made by the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford is that British Gas will be a private company and not a nationalised industry in the future. I accept that, but British Gas could exercise compulsory rights of entry only in limited circumstances. I refer the hon. Gentleman to clause 18, and in particular paragraphs 14 to 17 of schedule 5. That clause and the paragraphs of schedule 5 control rights of entry. I do not think that there is any disagreement or concern over the need for rights of entry in an emergency. But, outside emergencies, rights of entry can only be exercised with a magistrate's warrant under the procedure set down in the Rights of Entry (Gas and Electricity Boards) Act 1954.

That is particularly relevant to the new clause and the debate on the consumer councils, because if there were any question of abuse of those powers, it is certainly an area where the council could receive a complaint, investigate it and act upon it in order to assist a consumer, if the consumer felt that any of the powers in the Bill were being abused in any way.

Mr. Lofthouse: I should like to clarify a point. On page 77, in schedule 5, paragraph 17, the Bill spells out the provisions as to powers of entry:

"Where in pursuance of any powers of entry conferred by this Part of this Schedule, entry is made on any premises by an officer authorised by a public gas supplier".

Before the officer can have that authority, must he have a justice's warrant?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I should like to look into that point and I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman.

The important point in this debate on consumer councils is that we must ensure that the consumers council has the power to investigate any complaint from a gas user.

We have had a useful debate on what is an important matter. I make no complaint about the amount of time spent on Second Reading, in Committee or during Report this afternoon in debating the interests of consumers, and the best way to protect them and deal with them. By spelling it out in the new clause, we have made it clear what the powers of the new Gas Consumers Council are, and to whom it can refer any complaints that it feels are justified. I am grateful for the welcome that has been given to it.

I am sorry that I cannot accept the new clause of the right hon. Member for Salford, East or the amendments associated with it, for the reasons that I have explained, but I believe that what is now in our new clause, if the House approves it, will give the new Gas Consumers Council a much clearer background against which to operate. I am sure that that is to the benefit of consumers.

Mr. Orme: We shall not oppose the Government's new clause, although we feel that it does not go far enough. It is only the guillotine that prevents us from voting for our new clause.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 9

STATEMENTS IN CONNECTION WITH FLOTATION

'(1) This section shall apply where—

(a) an offer for sale to the public of any securities of the successor company is made by or on behalf of the Crown;

(b) any invitation or advertisement is issued (whether or not in documentary form) by or on behalf of the Crown in connection with the offer; and

(c) that invitation or advertisement does not contain all the listing particulars.

(2) None of the persons mentioned in subsection (3) below shall incur any civil liability by reason of the invitation or advertisement, or any omission from it, if—

(a) the contents of the invitation or advertisement were submitted to the Council of The Stock Exchange;

(b) that Council did not object to the contents of the invitation or advertisement; and

(c) the invitation or advertisement and the listing particulars, taken together, would not be likely to mislead persons of the kind likely to consider the offer.

(3) The persons referred to in subsection (2) above are—

(a) the Crown;

(b) any person acting on behalf of the Crown in connection with the offer;

(c) the maker of any statement contained in the invitation or advertisement;

(d) any person responsible for the preparation of, or of any part of, the listing particulars.

(4) The reference in subsection (2) above to a person mentioned in subsection (3) above incurring civil liability shall include a reference to any other person being entitled as against the person so mentioned to be granted any civil remedy or to rescind or repudiate any agreement.

(5) In this section "the listing particulars", in relation to the offer, means such particulars as, by virtue of any provision of any enactment other than this section or of any subordinate legislation, have been approved by the Council of The Stock Exchange for the purposes of the admission of the securities to which the offer relates to the Official List of The Stock Exchange.'.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take the following:—

New clause 7—

DRAFT PROSPECTUS

'The Secretary of State shall present to Parliament a draft prospectus for the successor company which shall include independent valuations of the company.'.

Government amendment No. 38.

Mr. Hunt: The House will be aware that the mini-prospectus is becoming a popular art form in the flotation of companies, particularly those moving from the public to the private sector. It is a particularly valuable means of publicising an issue the size of British Gas, in attracting the necessary funds and a wider spread of share ownership. Nevertheless, mini-prospectuses are a relatively recent innovation and were first given general application under the Stock Exchange (Listing) Regulations 1984, which implemented three European Community directives. Like many such useful tools, they carry one possible disadvantage: it could be argued that the process of abridgement or extraction of selected information from the full listing particulars that the preparation of a mini-prospectus involves could give rise to liability for misrepresenation or the omission of material facts, although they have been amply disclosed in the full prospectus.

A provision is included in clause 126 (5) of the Financial Services Bill to give protection against any liability thus arising where the material has been approved by the stock exchange under the 1984 regulations. However, we are dealing with the present situation. I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House, whatever their views on the principle of the proposed flotation of British Gas, will agree that we should make full use of the marketing tools available. The new clause provides the necessary protection against liability that might arise simply by virtue of the abridgement that I have described, despite the fact that full disclosure would already have been made elsewhere. It is a protection that the Government are proposing to extend to all issues under the Financial Services Bill. I therefore urge hon. Members to support the new clause.

5.15 pm

Mr. Orme: We find the Government's approach to flotation unacceptable. I specifically draw attention to new clause 7, which states:

"The Secretary of State shall present to Parliament a draft prospectus for the successor company which shall include independent valuations of the company."

We say that because of what has happened in previous flotations, not least British Telecom. Because of the strength of our feeling and because our new clause is not likely to be reached in the voting pattern, I shall ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote against the Government's new clause 9. We shall do so because of the importance that we attach to the flotation of shares.

The terms of the sale of British Gas are a cause for concern, particularly in view of the report of the Public Accounts Committee on the sale of British Telecom. Unfortunately, the PAC's reports are always after the event, for obvious reasons, and therefore too late to influence it. However, it is not too late to influence the sale of British Gas. That is why we raise the matter on the Floor of the House now.

The Government have said, and Ministers said in Committee, that the PAC's conclusions would be taken fully into account when the new clauses were considered. Looking at the Amendment Paper, we find that that is not so. Our new clause gives us the opportunity to discuss and put forward our views on that important matter.

The reports of the PAC are an indictment of the handling of the sale of BT. We use the argument about BT, as we did in Committee, because it is the only parallel that we can use for the size of the sale, in that it is a transfer of a public monopoly into a private monopoly. We are dealing with a large amount of expenditure. The British taxpayer has a right to be informed about the proposed sale.

The City continues to be the main beneficiary of privatisation. For example, in fees, commission and so on, in the small sale of Associated British Ports, the City made £2·6 million. It made £12·5 million on Britoil, and a massive £190 million on British Telecom. In its 17th report on 16 May 1984, the PAC criticised the failure to use the usual Government method of floating new Government stocks and the Government's heavy reliance on the advice of merchant bankers who also had a stake in the sale as underwriters. That shows clearly that there have been conflicts of interest in the conduct of previous flotations. Who can have confidence in the City at present? What is happening in some areas of the City of London is a disgrace. In effect, about £200 million is being handed over in the sale of a public company, to which a large part of the electorate is opposed. Therefore, we must endeavour to protect their interests and at least bring forward the issues.

Many of the PAC's criticisms are a direct result of the undervaluing of shares. For instance, a gain of 18 per cent. was made on the sale of Cable and Wireless, with a loss of £40 million to the taxpayer. For Associated British Ports, the gain was 23 per cent., the equivalent of £10·58 million. Amersham International showed a gain costing

[Mr. Orme]

the taxpayer £22 million. However, the most astonishing example has been the sale of British Telecom. In December 1984, the *Financial Times* commented:

"the Government have sold BT for some £1·3 billion less than its initial stock value".

According to the share index in *The London Standard* today, British Telecom shares are selling at 218p a share yet, at the time of BT's sale, they were sold at 130p a share. There has already been a massive gain in the pricing of British Telecom shares. The taxpayer is paying for it, but what benefit has he had from the sale? Recently, BT prices, not least standing charges, have increased, and this is affecting pensioners and many other sections of the community.

No doubt the Under-Secretary of State saw the recent "World in Action" programme which looked closely at the sale of BT. Independent financial experts said that by the summer it was increasingly clear that the sale would be a success. The sale was first thought to be a massive risk, but that was no longer the case. The programme told us that one firm of City stockbrokers upset its competitors by saying that and was accused of "talking up" the selling price. The success of the sale was described as inevitable —similar to giving £10 notes for £5 notes.

British Telecom was a British-owned company, one of the 10 most successful companies in the United Kingdom, and was sold off for one reason — to enable the Government to use the proceeds for tax relief at what they thought was the appropriate time. British taxpayers are still paying for that massive undervaluation. The "World in Action" programme pointed out that if the proceeds had been used differently 30 hospitals could have been built. Instead, the money was used to line the pockets of people in the City.

The third report of the Committee of Public Accounts, which was printed on 11 November 1985, continued the scrutiny of the sale of British Telecom. In the coming months and years, will we see the PAC dealing with the sale of British Gas in the same way? Will people wring their hands and say, "Why did we allow that to happen?" I wish to put it on the record, as, no doubt, do other hon. Members, that we warn the British public before the event of the consequences of the sale. The PAC concluded that the Department of Trade and Industry got the flotation hopelessly wrong. The Committee understood why the Department and the Treasury took that underwriting course but was

"not convinced that the extent of risk justified the rates agreed for placing commission."

The Committee noted the Department's explanation of the reasons for the high premium in the aftermarket but was

"surprised that the Department had not foreseen the possibility of this situation arising. Inevitably this also raised the question whether . . . the Government objective of maximising net sale proceeds has been met. Moreover, we note the Department's view that if the special selling measures led to their receiving an extra 4p a share that was equivalent to £120 million. By the same token it can be argued . . . that the price was over cautious and that a modest further increase . . . would have brought in a higher return without risk".

That would have meant a higher return to the taxpayer. Whatever one's view on privatisation, this can be seen only as a powerful indictment of the way in which the matter was handled.

There has not been a Government response to the PAC report. The Secretary of State for Energy today gave a response to the report of the Select Committee on Energy. On Sunday, the right hon. Gentleman rubbished the report of the Select Committee on the Environment. The right hon. Gentleman has been quick to reply to the reports of the Energy and Environment Select Committees, which are not strictly within his remit, but he has not replied to the PAC's report, with its implications for British Gas.

The PAC report commented also on the sale of shares overseas. Within the first week, every British Telecom share put into the New York market was sold back into Britain, giving New York investors a killing of £108 million. The PAC recommends that

"a thorough review of the method, desirability and value of overseas sales should be carried out by the Department and the Treasury."

What do the Government have to say about the sale overseas of British Gas shares? They have appointed a Japanese merchant bank, Goldman Sachs of the United States and the Swiss Bank Corporation to promote the sale of shares overseas. This morning, the *Financial Times* was catching up with events—it was a little behind the times —in referring to the 15 per cent. limit on the sale of shares overseas. We should like the Government to spell out how that sale will operate in terms of the information they put before the Standing Committee. We should like also information which the Standing Committee was not given on the operation of the golden share. We are dealing with a crucial industry and we are, therefore, entitled to ask for more information.

The purpose of the new clause is to allow Parliament to assess the method of the sale, to ensure that valuations are independent and to scrutinise the desirability of promoting sales overseas. If the Government are selling off our national assets—it does not matter whether it is Westland, British Leyland or British Gas—they should at least ensure that the sale does not result in tremendous losses for the taxpayer.

The new clause offers the Government an opportunity to show that their hands are clean and that they are not just providing another killing for the City. Their actions with public assets must come under public scrutiny, preferably before mistakes are made. There must be scrutiny by the House. That is why the new clause is important. We are entitled to a Government reply. If that reply is not satisfactory, we shall divide the House.

5.30 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers: The Minister made some interesting slips when introducing the new clause, and I was particularly interested in his reference to the prospectus as an art form. This Government would turn me off anything, and the description of the prospectus as a particularly interesting art form would not encourage me to buy shares in British Gas. Although I shall not buy them, many other people will. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) said, it will almost be like giving people £10 notes for £5 notes.

It should be remembered that this flotation is not part of the Government's policy of extending share-owning democracy. Given the immense volume of the flotation, it is clear that the number of British Gas employees who will take up shares will be relatively small. It is more than likely that the billions of pounds of shares that will be floated will be bought by the institutions in the City and on the exchanges of New York and Japan. Therefore, it is a smokescreen for the Government to suggest that they

are returning a national industry into the hands of the British people through the purchase of shares. That is absolute nonsense. One could even say that such a suggestion is a lie. To a large extent, as with British Telecom, the ownership of these shares will fall into the hands of the large institutions which will be at least one or two, if not more, steps divorced from the British public. As a result, British Gas will be even further removed from the British people than it is at present.

That is why the Opposition have tabled new clause 7. We want to ensure that the value of the gift that is to be handed over is known to the public at large. As was said in Committee, many parts of British Gas were taken into public ownership without compensation. It is a bit much that assets which were formerly owned by municipalities and local government should now be sold without such bodies receiving any compensation. That is especially so, given that compensation was paid by the Labour Government to the private corporations that ran sectors of the gas industry prior to public ownership. That is why we have argued that there should be a proper evaluation of the assets, so that a comparison can be made with the assets at the time that the industry was taken into public ownership, and so that proper compensation can be paid.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East referred to the huge sums of money that would be paid to the stockbrokers in the City of London. It will run into millions of pounds for a job that a donkey could do. This national asset will be worth around £17 billion, and up to £1 billion may be paid to City stockbrokers for handling this flotation. In Committee we considered the mechanics of the flotation at some length. Some figures were given about the volume of the flotation and the fact that the amount involved might be two to three times the total sum handled by the City of London on new issues in any one year. In other words, this flotation could take up all the investment capital available for a considerable time.

Last week the Secretary of State for Transport said that there would be a delay in the privatisation of British Airways, and the Minister of State said that this was due to all sorts of reasons that were outside the Government's control. I giggled at that, because the truth is that the market could not stand these two flotations this year. The Government have decided to go ahead with the sale of British Gas and to hold back the sale of British Airways, simply because not enough money is available as investment capital to allow the two flotations to proceed at the same time. That is another Government hypocrisy that has been exposed as we have considered the Bill.

I accept that the Government have a sufficient majority to ensure that this exercise goes ahead. We are anxious that they produce information on which the people can judge what it is all about. We had some successes in Committee and received some publicity, but we shall continue to expose the Government for the charlatan way in which they are promoting this Bill.

Mr. Rost: I welcome the Government's new clause, which will allow a mini-prospectus to be issued. It would be nonsense if that were not allowed. A full prospectus would have to be published in large quantities, and would probably take up to eight or 10 pages in one of the heavy newspapers. Apart from the enormous cost involved, the average investor does not read the small print anyway. He wants to know who is backing the issue, who the brokers are, who the advisers and merchant bankers are, and who the sponsors are. In this case, the Government have some good names sponsoring the flotation.

Even the experienced professional investor will take much of the small print as read, provided that the backers are reputable and that their reputations are at stake. If we are to encourage the new smaller investor and British Gas employees to become involved in this issue—that is the main motivation of the Government's privatisation policy; it is the spreading of capitalism—it is essential that we do not confuse such investors with an enormously bulky prospectus published in the newspapers or elsewhere that will simply put them off. On the other hand, a simplified prospectus might encourage the small investor to go for it.

Although I have sympathy with some of the arguments put by the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), I feel that he over-stated his case. He referred to PAC criticism of previous flotations. I sympathise with him, and have supported him publicly on previous occasions, but if the right hon. Gentleman is basing his argument on the subsequent rise in the price of British Telecom shares, he should reflect on whether he has over-stated his case. In fact, since British Telecom was floated about 15 months ago the share price has risen substantially, but the right hon. Gentleman did not point out that the BT share price has risen by far less than most other leading shares during that period. If investors had bought other shares, such as in Imperial Chemical Industries, they would have more than doubled their money. Indeed, a portfolio of leading shares would have done much better for investors than have British Telecom shares.

The right hon. Gentleman should also have pointed out that the market as a whole has risen substantially during the past 15 months—by more than 40 per cent. I do not have the figures before me, but within that market many leading companies' shares have more than doubled in price. This is a reflection of confidence in the Government's economic policy. The encouragement of new investors and the new mood of optimism is reflected in investor confidence, at home and abroad, in the Government and in the future of our economy. For the right hon. Gentleman to criticise the flotation of British Telecom as having been under-priced because the whole market sector has improved substantially is to be unfair to himself, because he usually presents a fairer argument.

I sympathise slightly with the gist of the right hon. Gentleman's overall criticism of the basis of flotation of the Government's privatisation programme. There is a better way of establishing a fairer price than we have so far achieved. I cannot understand why it is essential that 100 per cent. of the shares that the Government intend to sell must be sold on one day. That is unnecessary. The Government do not sell their gilts in that way, and companies do not sell their shares in that way. They sell sufficient shares to establish a market, and then gradually peddle them once the market level has been established. There seems to be no reason why the Government, who are acting on behalf of the nation as the trustee for British Gas shares, should not establish a market by selling 10 per cent. and withholding 90 per cent. of the shares, and then sell the 90 per cent. gradually during the following months, probably fairly rapidly, at a market level which will have established itself according to the market

[Mr. Rost]

assessment of the value of British Gas. If the flotation were handled in that way, it would overcome the necessity for the right hon. Gentleman's new clause.

While I understand the gist of the right hon. Gentleman's argument, the proposal that a fair independent valuation should be prepared for British Gas and presented to Parliament is nonsense. The only independent fair valuation is the market valuation. Many investments and companies are valued on a fraction of their asset values. I can name any number of oil companies which are valued at well below their asset values, and I can think of many investments and companies which are valued at many times their asset values because of the premium that is paid for management, prospects or goodwill.

I do not understand what the right hon. Gentleman means by an independent valuation. The only independent valuation that is meaningful is the market valuation—the balance between supply and demand, and buyers and sellers. That is why I suggest that if British Gas and other privatisation issues are to be floated by the Government, only a small proportion of shares should be issued initially to establish an independent share valuation through a balance between buyers and sellers in the market. That way we would not have the problem which has been highlighted and criticised by the Public Accounts Committee, and shareholders—the nation—would be guaranteed a fair price. It is inevitably almost impossible to value in advance a company of this nature.

That is important if we are to encourage wider share ownership and the new small saver to buy shares in British Gas. A genuine investor will not be put off by the proposal for a fair valuation, because he will not go for a quick short-term profit, but will be more interested in long-term investment. Certainly British Gas employees, whom we hope will participate, will consider the long-term interest, because their future and livelihood are involved. Therefore, they will not take a short-term view or be tempted by a quick short-term profit.

The right hon. Gentleman's new clause is impractical and unnecessary if we think carefully about the way in which the flotation of British Gas should be handled to achieve a fair balance between the desire to encourage new small investors and employees, and to seek a fair price for the nation and shareholders.

5.45 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I wish to deal with the new clauses tabled by the Government and the Labour party. It is conceivable that when the Secretary of State announced the privatisation of British Gas many people outside the House who do not hold the strong ideological views that are represented across the divide may have thought that it seemed not a bad idea. During the past few months the House has witnessed a dynamic change which requires this massive flotation to be considered carefully.

It has been said, and, indeed, it should be true, that this is the biggest single company flotation that we have ever seen. When the Secretary of State announced the flotation, the price of oil was nearly $30, which consequently increased the valuation of British Gas above what it is now, when the price of oil has fallen to $15. If Sheikh Yamani is to be believed—he has not been wrong during the past few months—the price of oil is heading towards $8.

If those circumstances prevail, it is reasonable to assume that one would not expect to offer a major energy company on the market in the autumn. We have legitimate reasons for ensuring that the prospectus and details of the flotation are brought back to the House because the needs of the Conservative party may conflict substantially with the national interest. The House and even the Government's supporters are entitled to ensure that we are not forced to make a flotation at the bottom of the market and in circumstances where the valuation of British Gas, which should be about £8 billion, could be depressed by up to £3 billion simply because of the oil and gas markets.

I have considerable sympathy with the sentiments behind new clause 7 and the provision that the prospectus should be brought back to the House. I have heard the Minister's objections to that, but he should recognise that we are considering a major issue, not something that can be brushed aside by saying, "Trust us. We are the Government. We shall do it in the best way." There is a clear conflict of interests between the Conservative party's political objectives and the national interest.

It is important that this peculiar sort of flotation is spelt out in significant detail. It is wrong to privatise a major utility, as we are doing, especially in a way which neither introduces an element of major competition nor produces proper accountability and regulation. If it is appropriate to bring private money into a major utility, such as British Gas, the right approach would be to look for some sort of franchise operation. It is a privilege to operate a utility, and, to paraphrase what has already been said, it should not be a licence to print money. The right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) said that the British Telecom flotation had been described as buying £10 notes for £5 notes. Our worry is that the Government, in their desperation, might offer £10 notes for £2 or even £1, because they are anxious to get their hands on the money in the short term and will float the company even when the market is out of tune with the flotation. It is important that those who are invited to subscribe to the British Gas Flotation are aware of the circumstances.

Another factor that must be taken into account is that there is likely to be a general election within a year of the flotation. The prospectus must spell out the political objectives of a different Government. I shall not speculate on the nature of that different Government, but let us assume that they are not a Conservative Government. If they are not, there will be moves towards greater regulation of British Gas and greater accountability, which will affect the value of the shares. If the Government floated British Gas at the bottom of the market, some people might make a substantial killing. However, if they held off a little longer or the price recovered, some people might be surprised later to discover that the British Gas operation was not as cheerful as they had thought and was not a licence to print money. In those circumstances, they would have had every right to know in advance the risks that they were taking.

On balance, the greater risk is that the Government will sell us short rather than the other way round. In those circumstances, the Minister should accept that a substantial body of opinion outside the House is not satisfied with the way in which the Committee stage of the Bill was conducted and the fact that no significant changes

were made. The Government seem intent on pressing ahead with the flotation, ignoring the completely changed market circumstances since the idea of privatising British Gas was mooted. Therefore, the Government should bring the details of the prospectus back to the House and should require that a full explanation of what is involved is laid before the prospective shareholders. They must not simply say, "Leave it to us." I am afraid that we do not trust them.

Mrs. Clwyd: Conservative Members have tried to convince us that wider share ownership is good for everyone, but research has shown that the number of individual shareholdings in privatised companies drops dramatically soon after privatisation and that strategic control of the stock remains in relatively few hands. In Cable and Wireless, for example, the initial 150,000 shareholders slumped to 26,000 within a year, and 467 large shareholders owned three quarters of the 346 million shares in private hands. There are plenty of similar examples, and it is a fraud to suggest that wider share ownership will be achieved by privatisation.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) said forcefully, public assets have been substantially undervalued. If the Government have nothing to hide—if they are not simply trying to line the pockets of their friends—there is no reason why they should not support our new clause. Of course, they might be doing what we all suspect they are doing. As my right hon. Friend said, the terms of sale of British Gas are a cause for great concern. Our new clause tries to do something about them.

My right hon. Friend gave detailed examples of sale receipts, percentage speculative gains and the immediate loss to the taxpayer in previous privatisations. Indeed, the Government have a poor record on such sales. Their practice is to sell assets cheaply so that flotations cannot fail. The Government's problem now is the falling price of oil, which is increasing the public's anxiety about the sale of British Gas. My right hon. Friend talked about the Public Accounts Committee, which expressed its worries about stock going to an immediate substantial premium and creating windfall gains for the investor at public expense. He challenged the Minister to answer the points made by the PAC, and perhaps we shall hear some answers from him today.

The Public Accounts Committee made an important point about the handling of share sales. It mentioned the advice of merchant bankers, on which the Government rely heavily, who also have a stake in the sale as underwriters. The PAC said that the merchant bank advisers who were also underwriting the issue would have an incentive to ensure that the issue was fully taken up.

An interesting side effect of the privatisation programme that we discussed in Committee is that the public spotlight is beginning to focus on the fat fees for the City. I am not surprised that Conservative Members have so vigorously defended privatisation. My right hon. Friend gave examples of the millions of pounds lost to taxpayers by the previous 10 sales of nationalised companies. The report on British Telecom showed that the Government and their advisers undervalued the offer by a factor of five, while the City was rewarded with sale fees of at least £128 million.

The new clause is designed to ensure that that does not happen again. Judged by any standards—even by the standards of Conservative Members—those fees are excessive and appear to bear no relation to whether a sale has failed. We want basic information on why large fees are charged and paid to enable us to determine how the costs are arrived at. The Public Accounts Committee and Parliament should investigate the fees and other expenses paid for privatisation sales, not with a view to establishing what is normal in the City, but with a view to discovering how the costs are arrived at and distributed and whether the taxpayer is getting value for money. Why have the Government ignored the advice of the PAC that the Bank of England be used more often as an adviser during sell-offs?

Unless the Government support our new clause, the Bill will simply line the pockets of their friends. The salaries of the chairmen and top directors of 10 privatised companies increased by an average of 83 per cent. within two years of privatisation. The profits that once belonged to the public are being plundered to pay excessive salary increases to top executives.

If the Government do not support our new clause, they will show what we suspect: that the privatisation programme has more to do with private greed than with public need.

Mr. David Hunt: The right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) and his hon. Friends have extended the debate to cover some general points on the flotation. My hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) was right to say that this is a marvellous opportunity for wider share ownership. The Government have made it clear that they intend to ensure that the ownership of British Gas is widely spread throughout the British public, and specific proposals will be made to ensure that those who manage the industry and are employed in it can have a direct stake in the industry for which they work.—*[Interruption.]* Now that I have woken up the Opposition Front Bench, may I make some more important points?

The Government are determined that the privatisation of British Gas will be good for the consumer, the employee and the nation. Anybody who now objectively studies the legislation, improved further here today, will see that that is the clear objective. No longer will British Gas suffer from unwarranted restrictions on its freedom to act as an efficient, successful and commercial business.

6 pm

The right hon. Member for Salford, East quoted from the Public Accounts Committee report, and the Government treat its comments seriously and will carefully consider the points that it makes. The formal response will, however, be a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The right hon. Gentleman said that he and his hon. Friends wanted to involve Parliament in the details of the proposed sale of shares in British Gas. I fully understand their interest in the contents of the prospectus, which will naturally and rightly be the subject of the widest possible interest.

Part II will enable the assets of BGC to vest in a Companes Act company wholly owned by the Crown, with the securities issued to the Secretary of State. Clause 50 specifically contemplates the disposal by the Secretary of State of such securities. Parliamentary approval to the Secretary of State's exercise of his powers of disposal will therefore have been given when the Bill reaches the statute book. Therefore, it is not necessary to involve Parliament in the details of the execution of those powers, and it

[Mr. David Hunt]

would not be appropriate to require in the statute the presentation to Parliament of the prospectus in relation to one particular private sector company over another.

Nevertheless—I pay particular regard to what my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash said—my right hon. Friends and I shall pay particular regard to making the prospectus available to Parliament. We shall arrange for copies to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses at an appropriate time. I share my hon. Friend's view that we must see the widest possible extension of share ownership through this privatisation issue.

Hon. Members seek independent valuations of the company in the prospectus, but it is nonsense to value companies on the basis, for example, of the current cost of replacing all its assets. The company's value should be seen as the value of the business to investors, and depends on a number of factors at the time of sale, including the profitability of the company, and of other companies in the same market sector, and the overall state of the market. The new clause proposed by the Opposition is both unnecessary and inappropriate, and I shall urge my hon. Friends to vote against it. We want as wide a spread of ownership as possible, in particular to the employees of British Gas. My right hon. Friends and I are determined to see that the flotation provides an opportunity for all those employed in this great industry to have participation in its future success. Managers and employees will have a unique opportunity, for the first time, of a direct benefit resulting from their future success.

Mr. Bruce: If the Government thought that the market was adverse, are there any circumstances under which they would postpone or abandon the sale for commercial reasons?

Mr. Hunt: That question and the hon. Gentleman's contribution to the debate have demonstrated once again that the Liberal party is all over the place. It does not know whether to support or oppose the issue. I have noticed that there has been a singular absence of any member of the SDP here. Perhaps that is a good thing, because we do not know where the Liberal party or the SDP stand on this point.

Mr. Bruce: Answer the question.

Mr. Hunt: The answer to the question is that it is now evident for all to see that neither the Liberal party nor the SDP wants this issue to be a success. I have news for them —it will be a success. I have no doubt that the future commercial success of Britain will greatly benefit from the ownership of this company being spread among the employees, the managers, the pension funds and individual investors. These proposals will enhance the commercial success of our nation and bring benefit to industry, consumers and the employees.

Mr. Orme: With the leave of the House, Mr. Speaker. The Minister's reply proves that we were right to table our new clause. The House is right to scrutinise the sale of a major national asset. On almost every occasion that the Government have privatised, they have got it wrong over the sale of shares. This is the biggest sale of shares ever. As for wider share ownership, we have seen what has happened with the shares that have been resold and gone into larger units and companies. For example, the total share ownership of British Telecom among employees is less than 2 per cent. Therefore, I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote against the Government's new clause, on the basis that our new clause on public scrutiny by the House of Commons is the correct one.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 228, Noes 185.

Division No. 102] **[6.10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irving, Charles
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*

Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Porter, Barry
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. Mark Lennox Boyd.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Meriones'n)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 1

REGIONAL COMPANIES

'The Secretary of State shall as soon as possible after the transfer to the successor Company of the property, rights and liabilities of the Corporation form and register under the Companies Act 1985 a Company for each region of the Corporation and transfer from the successor Company to each such regional Company the property, rights and liabilities

formerly pertaining to the Corporation in each relevant region together with a share of the property, rights and liabilities of the successor Company which the Secretary of State shall deem equitable.".—*[Mr. Wilson.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Wilson: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause is probably one of most radical that has been tabled. Although many hon. Members are completely and utterly against the privatisation of British Gas, it is recognised that the Government have a substantial majority and on Second Reading the vote was given for privatisation. My new clause is no approval of privatisation—I am against it. The structure that has been adopted by the Government for British Gas is highly dangerous.

My new clause seeks to establish not the one successor company that the Government have outlined as appropriate to take over the work, enterprise, rights, assets and obligations of the BGC, but to use the mechanism that exists in the Bill for the successor company so as to provide for each of the regional boards or areas of British Gas to be divided up into companies and for those to be floated on the stock market.

It is important to address ourselves to a point that did not emerge in Committee but which was acceded to in Committee—that British Gas in its present form is a public utility which is highly centralised but which has some regional operations which, prior to the 1972 Act, were autonomous boards in the gas industry. Since nationalisation, bit by bit we have seen those powers disappear.

I am suggesting that we retain the central successor company. The Bill provides for transfer of the assets on a vesting day to that company. It would perhaps have been easier to eliminate that company altogether but I would be forestalled in that by the Bill's long title. In any event, it is a useful mechanism because, although I would prefer, for instance, to see Scottish Gas become a completely autonomous company with access to its own sources of gas, I recognise that that might not be appropriate to other parts of the United Kingdom. A substantial pool of gas is available to Scottish Gas because twice our market consumption share comes from indigenous resources in the North sea. I exclude the supplies of gas which come from the Norwegian sector. A successor company could be a holder of the pool of gas which exists and could make it available to the regional companies which will be set up to market it, to provide for the distribution services, the sales of appliances in the showrooms, and so forth.

There are some parallels to that. In England there is the Central Electricity Generating Board and there are marketing companies, but those are, of course, in the public sector. The independent television industry provides another example. The Independent Broadcasting Authority sponsors Independent Television News, which supplies news or central facilities to individual companies down the line. Those companies supply the programmes to the consumers and they have to pay their share of the costs of ITN.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): Following those analogies, will there be some franchising arrangement with the regional companies and do I take it from what the hon. Gentleman says that he has in mind marketing companies?

Mr. Wilson: No, I shall correct the hon. Gentleman's impression. I want gas companies in each region where British Gas currently operates. I would not necessarily take the franchising further than the analogy I gave in relation to ITN. It would not be appropriate in the circumstances that I have outlined. Nevertheless, it is quite a good analogy to show that there can be a central holding of the raw material of gas and yet independent companies would be able to market their own.

Alternatively, there is the other situation that I have described of an independent company in each area, but then the current pool of gas would have to be divided in some way so that a continuity of supply was provided for.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Would the regional companies that the hon. Gentleman proposes be independent or wholly owned subsidiaries of the central company? A strict reading of the new clause shows that they would be wholly owned subsidiaries of the central company.

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman was fortunate enough not to serve on the Standing Committee that considered the Bill which, to put it mildly, took a rather long time. If the hon. Gentleman consulted the Bill he would find that it is necessary to go through the procedure that I have outlined. The long title, in particular, would prevent the setting up of individual companies as successor companies through transfer by the Crown direct from British Gas. As I said at the outset, independent companies would be floated off separately and they would be centres of authority.

Let me deal with the structure which exists in the Bill. Whether or not we embark on the principle of privatisation, what the Government have sought to do is not acceptable to many people. In other words, they are turning a public monopoly into a private monopoly with no real opportunity for competition, with weak regulatory powers, and, as is hinted at in the abolition of the regional gas consumers councils now served by British Gas which was discussed earlier, we are seeing incipient centralisation by British Gas. That background is ominous. Few countries will allow the creation of such a huge monopoly on that basis. Indeed, in the United States, the home of the free market, legislation seeks to bust trusts when they come to that stage. The Americans found it necessary to break up "Ma Bell", whereas here we have an example of the Government going ahead with the creation of Mr. Gas. It is dangerous in terms of the accumulation of authority within the overall economy of the United Kingdom and it is also dangerous for the various areas of the United Kingdom because they will see what responsibility and authority is left to British Gas operating in their areas slide to the centre.

In Committee we discussed the fact that already British Gas is altering the name of Scottish Gas to British Gas Scotland and Wales Gas to British Gas Wales, and so on. A new uniform structure is being imposed from the centre.

The only reason why the Government have gone ahead with the privatisation of British Gas in this form is that they wish to sell in a hurry. Their time is running out and this is one example where the Government have not even tried to project the benefits of privatisation. Instead, they

seem more honest in their aims when they recognise that, given the reduction in oil revenues, it is a great advantage to them to have massive resources coming in, albeit of capital arising through the sale of shares in British Gas, in order to finance tax cuts for the next election. But that is a short-term advantage that would have disastrous consequences. In the interests of widening the share distribution and strengthening the economy, it would be far healthier for the Government to consider the flotation of separate companies, each having a distinctive basis. Thus, I have in mind the setting up of 12 companies.

In Committee I drew the following analogy. One of the difficulties facing Merseyside is the absence of indigenous companies. When Liverpool was flourishing, insurance and shipping companies acted autonomously, creating wealth and providing jobs in the area. Now there is a wasteland. Many of us in Scotland are worried that if too many of our companies are taken over, any opportunities to change our economy will go, along with the units on which we had previously relied. Thus, I fear the Bill's consequences for regional development.

In Committee, I drew attention to an interesting article by Mr. Dennis Wilson, a former director of British Gas, which appeared in the magazine *Gas World*. He lamented the abandonment of autonomous systems of staff and line management, and described the flight of authority from the regional boards under the 1972 Act, saying that they had been emasculated. He also complained that British Gas, at the centre, was spawning a central hyperstructure of mammoth proportions, situated in expensive London locations and of no benefit to local consumers. He clinched that argument with the remarkable information that, at March 1985, there were 6,768 employees at the headquarters of British Gas. As a former director, he made it clear that he thought that the headquarters exercised an over-close scrutiny of the activities going on in the various regions or areas of the corporation. He said that, although demanning and efficiency had been called for from British Gas as a whole, there had been 4·4 per cent. demanning in the regions with only 1·1 per cent. demanning at headquarters. That rings true.

Perhaps the headquarters staff are doing work that is duplicated elsewhere. But even if they are doing valuable work, it could be done at area headquarters. That would create employment as well as opportunities for promotion and advancement and would give a commercial boost to the many areas that suffer from high unemployment. Thus, good quality jobs are being lost. When so many employees are employed at head office a sort of arteriosclerosis of the corporation develops. However, as I am not medically qualified, I would not want to elaborate on that save to say that it does not bode well for the corporation's commercial health.

I believe that we should float off companies in each of the areas. They would carry out the main functions with the exception, perhaps, of buying gas, although they could perhaps undertake that function in competition with each other at a later stage. They could oversee supply within their respective areas, management techniques and the taking of decisions with regard to gas showrooms. Regional companies might well have the advantage of being able to favour local suppliers, which would be good for the health of the economy.

Moreover, the flotation of such companies would strengthen the economy, particularly in Scotland. Some of those companies would be substantial. The number of staff at regional level ranges from 5,000 to 11,000. Scottish Gas serves more than 1 million customers, has 74,000 appliance sales per year and carried out 1·25 million service jobs in the last year of operation. All those functions would be better controlled at an area level. Scottish Gas also has sales of £403 million and investment worth about £20 million per year. Its wages amount to £57 million and a recent magazine article estimated its pre-tax profits to be about £35 million. However, that is an estimate, as British Gas does not attempt to split up its overall profits between the area organisations.

I commend the new clause to the House. The Government should have undertaken something like it from the beginning, instead of creating a colossus which might have adverse effects on the economy. If a Scottish Gas plc was established it might make up, in some small way, for the recent loss of Andersson Strathclyde, Bells, House of Fraser, perhaps the Trustee Savings Bank if the appellate committee of the other place does not change the judgment, Coats Patons and possibly Distillers. It would greatly help the Scottish economy to have a new, thriving company on the market that was controlled from within Scotland. It might also be an answer to some of the economic problems affecting different parts of the United Kingdom, and I commend it to hon. Members.

Mr. Alex Fletcher (Edinburgh, Central): I shall be brief, as I was not a member of the Committee and so have not followed the arguments as closely as have the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State. I apologise to my right hon. Friend in advance in case I make some points which have already been considered in Committee, or which to his mind are too obvious even to be discussed. However, I am sure that my right hon. Friend will have patience with me.

I was attracted by the new clause because it gives the House a chance to consider the structure of the new, privatised corporation. My interest is based, not only on any regional or Scottish consideration, but on the question of how the corporation will develop over the years. We naturally think of British Gas as a national and local gas supplier and distributor, but we shall be introducing a company which has the capacity to stand alongside BP as a large high-tech energy business which is capable of supplying the domestic market as its primary consideration as well as of moving internationally and taking its place in the exploration, distribution and development of energy resources in other parts of the world. I have the same view of British Telecom, although it is the local and national telephone company. I hope that it will use its domestic base to exercise influence, economic power, and profitability in other parts of the world.

I return to the local, regional and Scottish scene. It is important for regional policy that the management and administration of separate regional companies — I see them as subsidiaries of the main privatised corporation — have local accountability. Their ability to contribute to high calibre management jobs would satisfy the regions and Scotland.

The proposed system will give us a local chairman who is little more than a PR man. He will have a grand title — I make no criticism of people holding such jobs — but he will be a PR officer for customer service. With separate fully accountable subsidiary companies, with all the local and regional assets in the balance sheet, we could have proper local management and boards of directors and some

[Mr. Alex Fletcher]

competition between regions in terms of service, quality of service and efficiency of administration. It would be possible to compare the efficiency of the different subsidiaries and to discover what benefits might accrue from the lessons learnt.

That is done in the electricity industry in Scotland. The two companies submit two balance sheets and accounts which include all the assets. A different system is operated south of the border by the Central Electricity Generating Board and the distribution boards, but the Scottish model is at least worthy of consideration and debate. The consumer should be able to judge, on a full and proper company law basis, the performance of one regional gas operating company compared with another, without taking anything away from the efficiency or efficacy of British Gas plc. With those thoughts in mind, I support the new clause.

Mr. Bruce: I support the new clause tabled by the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson), to which I have appended my name. The issue was raised in Committee and I regret that the Government are not prepared to face up to it. A number of matters have emerged. It is not just a question of before and after. The clause proposes to go further than what occurs at present. The Bill will create a more centralised gas industry. Even if the Government cannot accept the full thrust of the clause, they should have the grace to acknowledge that they are not simply transferring the status quo but are engaged in greater centralisation. Many of us feel that that is a retrograde step.

6.45 pm

The new clause suggests that we go further and create autonomous companies in Scotland and Wales and in the English regions. I accept that the competition would be limited, since the core business would have a substantial monopolistic element, but the scope for more competition would be greater. The transparency factor would be greater, but one would be able to examine the performance of different regional and national companies and draw lessons from them, whereas at present we are at the mercy of a centralised wisdom heavily concentrated at the corporate headquarters in London.

I suggest that the regional companies should be able to buy their gas—in most cases from British Gas through the transmission system—with the option of buying gas from other sources, whether that is from other than natural sources as technology changes, or from local natural sources onshore or offshore.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East mentioned the concern about the size of the British Gas Corporation headquarters in London. I fear that after privatisation the headquarters will be even bigger and that the management jobs available outside London will be fewer. Management decisions are being made at a central corporate headquarters and decision-making is not being devolved, so the freedom to pursue action needed in a particular area or region is not taken on board.

The decisions by North Thames gas on a particular course of action are fundamentally different from those that might be taken in Scotland. If they are that different, separate and autonomous companies should make the decisions. Each area should have the freedom to pursue policies in the light of local circumstances and different market circumstances.

Consumer councils have also been discussed in terms of regionalisation. I am slightly puzzled that some members of the Committee seemed enthusiastic about regional consumer councils, but were unwilling to accept that that need for local control and autonomy should reach the management and organisation of the gas industry. It seems strange to be in favour of regional consumer councils, but in favour of a unified, centralist, London-based corporation, without the opportunity to develop separate identities in the region.

The Government have rejected our proposals and have been inclined to rubbish them, but they have not come up with arguments as to why our proposals cannot be put into effect. The Minister will recognise that many people outside the House are puzzled about why that option has not been seriously considered. If it had been fully considered and the Government had said that they had examined it in depth but had good, coherent reasons why it would not be in the best interests of the consumer, the shareholders or the taxpayers, we should be more satisfied. The Government have said that they do not see any advantage in our proposals, but they have failed to say why.

In Scotland there is considerable interest in the idea of Scottish gas being handled by a separate company operating as an independent entity. It would have its headquarters in Scotland and the people of Scotland would have a direct stake in it. We see no reason why other regions, such as Wales, should not be given a similar opportunity. The proposal does not mean that there would be no centralised gas industry. Of course the transmission system must be centralised, and many of the corporate offices will continue to function to provide a service, but we need a counterbalance.

A monolithic structure will pursue its own policies and there will be no opportunities for the Scottish, Welsh and the English regions to say that they do not believe that the corporate central decisions are in the best interests of their consumers. They will be outvoted. All that we shall have is a National Consumer Council with possibly one regional representative. That is a weak and inadequate alternative to what is proposed.

The Government should have explored the sentiment behind the new clause more thoroughly. I urge them to take on board our serious proposal, even if the clause is not structured perfectly. If the Government go ahead with their centralist philosophy they will alienate many people outside London who are fed up with decision-making being taken away from their locality and made in London. The decision-making process will be removed from their localities and there will be an inability to get at the person making the decisions. The local representative may continue to be near to someone's doorstep, but very often it will be necessary to go to London to get satisfaction or to change policy.

Mr. Douglas: I shall try to be brief, but we are dealing with an important issue which must be treated seriously. We have heard three speeches on the new clause and there have been three different interpretations of it, and I shall not necessarily present my interpretation of the clause. I am in favour of a decentralised operation. The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) made clear the

thrust of his argument in his closing remarks. He puts forward the clause as a piece of decentralisation, and in so doing claims that Scottish Gas plc will become the cure-all for the ills of the Scottish economy.

Mr. Wilson: I did not say that.

Mr. Douglas: I am not saying that the hon. Gentleman used those exact words, but he suggested that Scottish Gas plc would become a cure-all. Is he saying that the Strathclyde problem would be resolved and that Scottish Gas would lead to an expansion of employment? Under the existing structure we have had reasonable decentralisation. I do not say that everything has been perfect because public utilities, which tend to be monolithic, cannot be perfect. However, when a public utility has some form of accountability through a Minister to Parliament, pressures can be exerted in reflecting regional concerns.

The real thrust against the Government's proposals is that once the corporation becomes a company the chances of controlling it and achieving a regional dimension, whether the region is Scotland as a nation or another area, will diminish and evaporate almost completely. I found the remarks of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) humorous when he said that he wanted the new company to be a real challenger to BP. The Government introduced the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act 1982 and in so doing they stripped British Gas of any opportunities it had of engaging in exploration and production. However, every sinner who repenteth is worth while.

I think that I speak for all Scottish Labour Members when I say that we want to see decentralisation. However, we recognise that the chances of us exerting pressures within a regional dimension will diminish and evaporate once the Bill is enacted. That is why we are so opposed to it. I do not think that it is valuable to give the impression to the Scottish people, the Welsh people, or the people of any region of the United Kingdom that if we set up mini companies that are independent, or wholly-owned subsidiaries of the major company, they will cure the major difficulties within the Scottish economy and that Scotland will get a great prize.

Mr. Orme: The hon. Members for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) and for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) asked me on Second Reading whether the Opposition were in favour of the sort of proposal that is before us in new clause 1. I said then that we were not. Notwithstanding all the faults or weaknesses that may exist in British Gas, I think that Scotland, along with other areas, has had good service from it. The policy that has been advanced by the hon. Member for Dundee, East could lead to different charges in different areas. If independent companies were set up, their charges could be different. I come from the north-west and I do not want differential charging to be a feature of life in areas that are far from the centre. That would pose a danger for Scotland, Wales and other areas.

How far should we go with any independence that is created? I think that we should——

Mr. Wilson: It does not necessarily follow that charges in the more remote areas would be higher. In Scotland we have two electricity generating boards, and the price of electricity is cheaper to the customer in Scotland than in England and Wales. If a pool of gas is owned by the successor company and there is level pricing, any reductions in the price of gas that are enjoyed by the customer will be the result of the efficient management of the local companies.

Mr. Orme: I do not think that the parallel with electricity is valid. The hon. Gentleman is playing into the hands of Conservatives who talk about competition and want to see British Gas broken up. British Gas is highly efficient and the charges for gas are too high only because of things like the gas levy. The Government are draining away that which is created by the efficiency of British Gas. There could be cheaper prices in Scotland, Wales and England. The structure that is proposed by the hon. Gentleman would not work, and it would not be in the interests of Scotland or any other region within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Fletcher: The right hon. Gentleman said a few moments ago that there could be differential pricing in the regions. He argued that the further away from the centre an area was the more that that could be. Surely he is not suggesting that the centre of the gas industry is the west end of London. Everything depends on where the centre is.

Mr. Orme: It is not a geographical issue in that sense. When the Telecommunications Bill, as it then was, passed through the House, I was involved because of my responsibilities as an Opposition spokesman. There were major arguments on behalf of those living in rural areas and much time was spent discussing what would happen to them if the Bill were enacted. We spoke of the dangers of differential pricing.

The Opposition feel that the new clause is unnecessary. If the hon. Member for Dundee, East and those who support him force a Division on this issue, I shall ask my right hon. and hon. Friends not to support the clause.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I agree with the comments of the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) about the woolliness of the way in which the new clause was introduced by the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson). The hon. Gentleman talked about cheaper electricity being available in Scotland, but he did not acknowledge that the lower prices are related directly to the extent to which we depend upon nuclear power in Scotland. I hope that the hon. Gentleman consulted the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), and I hope that he in turn consulted his hon. Friends in the Social Democratic party.

With respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher), the alliance that we see on the new clause does not take into account the fact that the people of Scotland would not know where they were when it came to their energy policy. Each party would be advocating a different policy. On that basis, if on no other, anyone who believes that a clause of this nature would be for the benefit of Scotland would be wise to scrutinise closely precisely what it is that those who support it are trying to achieve.

I think that the hon. Member for Dundee, East was less than fair when he said that a new structure was being imposed on Scotland by British Gas. That is not true. British Gas is maintaining the structure and organisation that currently applies. There has been a change of name and Scottish Gas has become British Gas Scotland. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would prefer

[Mr. Buchanan-Smith]

"Scotland" to the adjective "Scottish". It is important that that is on the record, because the hon. Gentleman returns constantly to this issue and misleads people in describing what is taking place. As I said in Committee, there will be no change in the structure and organisation of British Gas Scotland.

I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central was less than fair to the chairman of what will be British Gas Scotland in describing him as no more than a public relations officer. My hon. Friend has a different kind of constituency, and I do not know whether he has had any dealings with the chairman, but I have had many dealings with the chairman in relation to service, transmission lines, and so on—I do not mean small individual consumer questions, but larger matters of supply to whole communities, renewal or reinforcement of transmission lines, and so on—and have never failed to obtain complete satisfaction. I felt, therefore, that my hon. Friend's comments belittled the chairman's role.

The hon. Member for Gordon asked why the proposal in the new clause could not be carried out, but nobody has said that. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman did not listen more carefuly to what was said in Committee. The question, as the right hon. Member for Salford, East has said, is whether it is worth doing and whether it is in the interests of consumers in Scotland.

Those who support the new clause must realise that we start from a successful, integrated industry. That is partly due to the development of North sea gas and the almost total reliance, apart from some liquid natural gas, on an integrated distribution system throughout the United Kingdom. Had we begun from the situation at the time of nationalisation, with individual gas works producing gas from coal in a large number of different places, different considerations might apply, but as we now have an integrated industry relying on a single source of supply it makes no sense to break it down.

Mr. Craigen: The Minister has spent so much time telling us what an excellent gas industry we have that I am surprised there is any need for privatisation. How can he guarantee that the industry will behave as he suggests in relation to structure once it is privatised?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: That is exactly the question that I wanted. I was getting worried that it would not be asked. I believe that the tests in the private sector—competition with other fuels in the industrial market, and so on—will provide far greater incentives to efficiency and higher standards of service to the consumer. It has been amply demonstrated that the private sector provides better standards of service and efficiency in the interests of the consumer.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) referred to the problem of a private company serving the interests of the region. For industrial consumers, as has been shown in this period of falling oil prices, competition from other fuels ensures that consumers obtain proper services. On the question of tariffs, the hon. Gentleman failed to recognise that the Director General of Gas Supply is charged under the Bill to observe the need to avoid preferences and to ensure fairness between different areas. I stress that point also to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central.

There might have been more of an argument if hon. Members could have said, as I thought my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central was about to say, that the new clause would lead to more competition. In fact, because there would still be a monopoly supplier in each region there would be no more competition than there would be among the various regions of British Gas. I believe—here I am absolutely at one with the right hon. Member for Salford, East—that the result would be differential pricing. I have dealt with the false analogy with electricity suggested by the hon. Member for Dundee, East. The fact that Scotland has far more scattered communities probably than any other region means that British Gas must provide special supplies of liquid natural gas, and so on. I accept that Scotland has problems, but without an integrated British Gas those problems could lead to much higher costs.

I believe that the new clause would do nothing to serve the interests of Scottish consumers. Having listened to those who spoke in favour of the new clause, I am left wondering what they really want. My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central wants a strong British Gas to go out into the world market, but British Gas is already in the world market. Representatives of British Gas have accompanied me on trade missions and British Gas provides consultancies, advice and services overseas. Breaking down that integrated industry within the United Kingdom would not serve the best interests of British Gas or its consumers in this country.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) asked the hon. Member for Dundee, East whether the proposed system would apply just to marketing or whether it would apply to franchising. The reply was, in effect, that the pool of gas would simply be divided up somehow. When the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West asked whether the companies would be subsidiaries of British Gas or whether they would be independent companies, the hon. Member for Dundee, East said that there would be centres of authority in the regions. That is woolliness of the first order. To accept the new clause would be to buy a pig in a poke. It would not be in the interests of consumers in Scotland and it would certainly not be in the interests of Scotland.

Mr. Wilson: I cannot allow the debate to end on the farcical note struck by the Minister, who suggested that I did not know what I was after. He clearly does not appreciate the idea of breaking up the centralised system that he has in force, and I am surprised at the way in which the Labour and Conservative parties seem at one in trying to maintain the Goliath of British Gas.

I am even more surprised to hear the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), for whom I have great respect, talking about the benefits of British Gas—from which I do not dissent—but failing to realise that British Gas plc will be completely unlike the previous organism and therefore that he cannot make judgments about how this creature will react on the basis of what has gone before.

Then there is the strange situation of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). Apparently Scottish Labour Members are all in favour of decentralisation but are not prepared to vote for it. Sooner or later they will have to make up their minds. It is a Labour party tradition

that everything should be organised from the centre, but I thought that they had been breaking away from that. I am very disillusioned by the attitude that they have adopted.

I am rather more cynical, of course, about the Government's stance on these matters. The Minister raises the question of differential pricing, but fails to acknowledge what was well known in Committee—that remote communities which are not connected to the main gas grid are charged a premium price for the liquefied gas provided. Is the Minister about to give an assurance that those communities will be provided with gas at the standard rate? If not, there is a huge hole in his argument about benefits.

As for the parallel with the network or grid, we already have that in the electricity supply industry. The North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board and the South of Scotland Electricity Board work together harmoniously on joint projects but still maintain their independence. They export power to each other and to the Central Electricity Generating Board, which in turn is linking up with Electricité de France, so it is possible for independent, autonomous companies to work in an international framework. If that is correct for the electricity supply industry, it seems self-evident that we could do so in relation to gas. The fact is that the Government want to keep a centralised gas corporation and the Labour party, which its leader has just described as a party of devolution, still wants to keep the power at the centre by having a huge organisation with 7,000 employees at its headquarters with all the tentacles coming out of London.

I hope that those hon. Members who believe in decentralisation, competition and a good service being offered within the gas industry will vote with me because I intend to press this matter to a Division.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 22, Noes 228.

Division No. 103] **[7.15 pm**

AYES

Beith, A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Craigen, J. M.
Freud, Clement
Hancock, Michael
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Maclennan, Robert
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Meadowcroft, Michael
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Gordon Wilson and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irving, Charles
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Key, Robert
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Maples, John
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Porter, Barry
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David

Taylor, John *(Solihull)*	Waller, Gary
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*	Ward, John
Temple-Morris, Peter	Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter	Warren, Kenneth
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*	Watson, John
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*	Watts, John
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*	Wheeler, John
Thornton, Malcolm	Whitney, Raymond
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*	Winterton, Mrs Ann
Twinn, Dr Ian	Winterton, Nicholas
van Straubenzee, Sir W.	Wolfson, Mark
Vaughan, Sir Gerard	Wood, Timothy
Viggers, Peter	Woodcock, Michael
Waddington, David	Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Waldegrave, Hon William	
Walden, George	Tellers for the Noes:
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*	Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*	Mr. Gerald Malone.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 3

RECOGNITION OF TRADE UNIONS BY THE PUBLIC GAS SUPPLIER

"(1) A public gas supplier shall extend recognition to Trade Unions supported by the staff.

(2) It shall also be the responsibility of a public gas supplier by agreement with such recognised trade unions to establish joint negotiating machinery for the purposes of regulating industrial relations, education and training, and health and safety in the company; and such machinery shall reflect both the regional and national structure of the public gas supplier."—*[Mr. Orme.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Orme: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause deals with recognition of trade unions by the public gas supplier when the British Gas Corporation becomes a public limited company.

The British Gas Corporation currently employs over 93,000 people in a vital industry. It is clearly essential that industrial relations in the industry continue to run smoothly and that the recognition and framework that currently apply should continue after privatisation. BGC management has been promising that everything will stay the same. The new clause gives substance to that promise, and puts it into legislation.

The new clause seeks to ensure that a public gas supplier does two things that will help industrial relations. First, it requires the supplier to recognise appropriate trade unions. That is the first step as it encourages staff to believe that they are properly represented. It ensures that management has a suitable channel for consultation and negotiation.

The second part of the new clause seeks to ensure that proper negotiating machinery is established by the supplier. That is nothing new. Under the Gas Act 1972 the BGC is required to establish machinery for the negotiation of terms of employment and the promotion of the health, safety and welfare of gas employees. That machinery already exists within British Gas. It is essential that it continues with legislative backing. If the Government are not prepared to accept the new clause, we want to know what changes will take place and what machinery there will be under British Gas plc.

The current machinery has developed over the years. It is centralised and efficient. Negotiations over salaries and major conditions of service in the gas industry take place primarily at national level. There is virtually no negotiation at local level, but at regional or district level there are various forms of consultative and negotiating machinery for dealing with such items as car allowance schemes and so on. The machinery for joint negotiation is based mainly on Whitley principles and consists of a trade union side and an employers' side. Therefore, one side of a council cannot outvote the other.

There are three national joint councils—the national joint council for gas staffs and senior officers, the national joint council for higher management, and the national joint industrial council covering manual workers. Those councils deal not only with grades and salaries but with the promotion of training, safety, health and welfare, and improved efficiency and methods.

For each of the 12 regions and for the headquarters of the BGC there are three joint committees or councils that cover consultative and negotiable matters. The composition of regional councils varies from region to region, but their joint membership ranges from 12 to 26 people. The regional councils are both consultative and negotiating bodies. Local service conditions agreements are made for such matters as deputising allowances, car allowances and so on.

There is no local negotiating machinery in the gas industry, but there is machinery for consultation. Local joint consultative committees have been established in many areas in accordance with the provisions of the Gas Act 1972, and they represent all grades of staff. Those committees deal with matters such as hygiene, health and welfare, and do not consider or discuss terms and conditions of employment.

It will be appreciated that the machinery currently in operation in the gas industry is elaborate and well balanced. I am informed that it works well, mainly because the employees feel that they are given a fair hearing. On that basis, they are prepared to accept decisions that they may not like. It would be a tragedy if an industrial relations procedure based on recognition of appropriate trade unions and the establishment of workable machinery were to be thrown away. Employees of the British Gas Corporation who have worked hard to create a successful industry deserve to have their future assured, at least in this important area. They already have such protection under the current Act. They should have it also under the new legislation.

I am disturbed by the deterioration of industrial relations in British Telecom since privatisation. Representations have been made to me on several occasions about the changes in work practices and in the form of consultation.

The consultative machinery in the BGC has been built up over many years. It has worked well and is accepted by management and trade unions. That machinery may appear perfect on paper, but when real problems arise between the workers, particularly when one is representing 93,000 of them, and management, those consultations are not love-ins, but serious negotiations in which major issues are decided, ranging from wages and conditions to safety and health. It would be wrong to form a public limited company without first creating consultative machinery.

I understand that British Gas has consulted its employees. It has issued bulletins decribing what will happen under privatisation and giving information about pensions and other matters, but those bulletins have not said that the machinery that now exists will continue. That

is why I have moved the new clause. We should like the Under-Secretary of State to give a full reply on these developments. The Government accepted the machinery provided under the 1972 Act, so what is wrong with accepting that machinery in an efficient privatised gas industry?

7.30 pm

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): I should like to support the motion. Trade unionism in the gas industry is by no stretch of the imagination an innovation. In three years, my union — the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union—will celebrate its centenary. That union began 97 years ago as the National Union of Gasworkers, and it has grown from strength to strength.

It is against that background that we make a perfectly reasonable request — that the rights of trade unions should be recognised and written into statute. There should be no question of the public limited company having the right to determine whether there shall be a trade union organisation. As long ago as 1945, the Heyworh committee commented on the industry in the following terms:

"we have satisfied ourselves that the necessary machinery for negotiations between the two sides exists and has a satisfactory record of achievement."

I should like to underline the words, "satisfactory record of achievement."

I am proud to be the founder member of the first staff branch of my union in the gas industry. I am proud that we have never had any industrial troubles. There were tough talks but we always resolved the issues by talking and did not need to take the ultimate step of strike action. In the 30 years in which I worked in the industry we never knew what it was to strike. It was only the nonsense floated by the Government about selling off the showrooms that led to the first ever national stoppage in the industry. It is to the Government's shame that extremely responsible people—the workers in the gas industry—were pushed into taking strike action.

The concerns to which I have referred are as valid today as they were in the past. One need only look at fortress Wapping where many first-class journalists have walked out because trade unions are being trampled on. Unless the new clause is accepted, the same could apply in the gas industry. Skilled workers by the score might walk out because they are not prepared to work in an industry that does not recognise trade unions.

Clearly, we want to continue the good industrial relations record because that would be to the consumers' benefit. It is not sufficient for the Government to say that the privatised company may make its own arrangements and be confident about that. The Government may be confident that British Gas plc will establish the same kind of negotiating machinery that the publicly owned gas industry has enjoyed, but I am not.

We are talking about a monopoly energy supplier. Disruptions to that industry would be catastrophic. The one-day strike against the selling off of gas showrooms was simply a shot across the bows. A national stoppage is almost unthinkable.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that one reason why we should be extremely worried is the Government's known hostility to trade unionism? Does my hon. Friend agree that that is all the more reason why, when the stupidity of privatisation takes place, we must be extremely careful to retain the trade union strength and organisation that has been built up in the gas industry?

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend has underlined my points. There must be some control by statute over monopoly. One can choose not to read *The Sun* or *The Times* but one cannot choose to live without gas.

Mr. Rost: Although I have been carefully following the Opposition's arguments, I find it difficult to understand why the new clause is necessary. I should have thought that all the evidence of previous privatisations during the past few years has shown that industrial relations improve once an industry has been privatised. There has been no question of workers in the industries not having proper representation. Industrial relations have improved in those industries mainly because large numbers of employees have become shareholders. The best way employees can have representations and communication with management is by their becoming shareholders, because shareholders can hold the management responsible for their actions by exercising their rights at annual meetings and even by dismissing the management if they wish. That pattern has been followed to tremendous effect in all the privatised industries.

I was a little surprised that the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) and the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown) did not say one word advocating that employees of British Gas plc should be encouraged to become shareholders. I should be more sympathetic to the new clause if union leaders were to give positive rather than the negative advice given in other privatised industries to the effect that union members should not subscribe for shares. Union leaders have given unfortunate advice to employees in companies such as the National Freight Consortium, British Aerospace and British Telecom not to subscribe for shares. Those who took that advice have suffered financially.

I would have hoped that the right hon. Member for Salford, East would, as part of his case for proper industrial relations and representation, have incorporated a plea that the union leaders in British Gas should be advising their members to become shareholders, thereby influencing the management and improve industrial relations by becoming owners of the business.

Mr. Pike: I support the new clause. We have already heard that only 2 per cent. of the shares in British Telecom are now held by BT employees. If the Government were really sincere, they would permit a workers' representative on the board of directors. However, they have failed to do so in respect of any of the industries that they have so far privatised, yet they talk about giving employees greater participation. Given the small percentage of British Gas shares that will be held by employees, it is unrealistic to expect that they will be able to elect a director who will specifically represent them.

Conservative Members frequently knock the role of trade unions, but they fail to recognise the important part the trade unions play in the running of industry. The trade unions and management have one mutual interest—to see industry succeed. They do not want to see the production line grind to a halt. That is bad for management, because profits go down, and it is equally bad for the workers, because they lose wages. It is obvious

[Mr. Pike]

that in conjunction with management the trade unions and the gas industry have had a tremendous record of achievement, and it is equally obvious that the procedures have worked well.

In Committee, the Minister said that an undertaking has already been given that the current procedures will be carried forward once privatisation take place. If that is so, there is no reason at all why the Government should not be prepared to accept this moderate and reasonable new clause. It will ensure that suitable procedures are carried forward, not only for the benefit of the workers but for the benefit of the industry and the nation as a whole. This is a sensible and modest new clause, and I hope that it will be supported.

Mr. David Hunt: This has been an interesting debate. I hope that Opposition Members will recognise that in drawing up the legislation the Government have made every effort to ensure that employees enjoy the same rights after privatisation as they do now. British Gas has made it clear in its privatisation reports for employees that the existing negotiating machinery, which is the substance of the proposed new clause, will be carried forward. That will apply at both national and regional levels.

Industrial relations is a matter to which the corporation rightly affords a high priority, and the record of the industry is a testament to the success of its attitude to staff. All sides of the House greatly welcomed the fact that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown) participated in the debate. In paying him that tribute, I hope he recognises that I do not accept what he said. However, the hon. Gentleman has a tremendous knowledge of this industry. I understand that he was apprenticed as a plumber to the Newcastle gas industry in 1937. He knows the importance of industrial relations to the present management of British Gas, and its record is a testament to the success of its attitude to the staff.

The new clause would require a public gas supplier to recognise the industry's trade unions and to establish joint negotiating machinery. There can be no doubt that British Gas has given full recognition to representative trade unions and that it will continue to do so.

The second limb of the new clause again seeks to re-establish section 35 of the 1972 Act, which placed a duty on the corporation to seek consultation with organisations on machinery for settling terms and conditions of employment and for the promotion and encouragement of safety, health, welfare, training and education. Again, the record of British Gas in these areas is second to none, and it is simple commercial prudence to ensure that it develops the skills of its staff in the interests of efficiency and customer service in general.

7.45 pm

British Gas has already assured those involved in the operation of the present negotiating machinery that it does not intend to make any changes in its approach as a consequence of privatisation, and the same assurance has been given to employees generally. If the existing arrangements prove inadequate in some way over the passage of time, any changes will be the subject of joint consideration between management and unions.

The right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Dunn) said that he had seen nothing in the privatisation reports to show that British Gas would continue the present arrangements. He said that it was for that reason that the Opposition proposed the new clause. I am happy to give him the opportunity now to withdraw the motion because privatisation report No. 6, under the heading of industrial relations, states:

> "British Gas has stated that it sees the existing negotiation and consultation arrangements which have served industry well in the past carrying us into the future. Over time we may need to alter our arrangements according to any new circumstances which may arise—but that would be a matter for joint consideration between management and Trade Unions."

Mr. Orme: My point was that that is not controlled by legislation. We are arguing that the management of British Gas could change and there could be an entirely different management. We therefore see nothing wrong in incorporating the provisions of the 1972 Act into this Bill.

Mr. Hunt: I apologise to the right hon. Gentleman. I thought he said that he could find nowhere in the privatisation reports an assurance that British Gas would continue the present arrangements. I thought I understood him to say that it was for that reason that the Opposition proposed the new clause.

We have already had a substantial debate in Committee on these questions, and in direct response to the right hon. Gentleman I made it clear that in the Government's view it would be wrong to write into this statute obligations that were not written into statute for other private sector companies. I then gave the Committee the assurances that I give now—that British Gas does not envisage any change in the existing negotiating machinery, and that it will continue its fundamental commitments to consultation and discussion on matters affecting employees.

Mr. Robert C. Brown: The Minister must surely appreciate the fears of the present employees of British Gas. If this provision is not written into statute, as it was in the 1972 Act, there is nothing at all to prevent the newly privatised management from suddenly becoming bloody-minded—as we have seen in the newspaper this week—and taking action that would be anathema to the entire British trade union movement. That could have dreadful repercussions for the nation.

Mr. Hunt: I understand the fears that the hon. Gentleman has expressed, but I believe that they are groundless. I hope that employees will recognise, in view of the assurances that they have received from the existing management, that there is no need to be concerned about the future of industrial relations, given the great tradition of this important industry in the past.

I very much welcome the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost). He has considerable knowledge of privatisation and profit-sharing. He rightly pointed out that there was Opposition silence on the question of buying shares, and that in the past there has been no encouragement from trade union leaders.

The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) misunderstood the importance of employee participation through share ownership. The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) also made a speech. The hon. Gentlemen are not correct. Nationalisation has not meant ownership by people or by employees. In reality, it has meant ownership by politicians and the Government. There is no need for the new clause to entrench in any way

arrangements which have existed until now. The legislation affords for the first time true public ownership of the gas industry.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 179, Noes 225.

Division No. 104] **[7.50 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Denl'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Ray Powell.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fry, Peter
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Key, Robert
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John

McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Francis Maude

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 4

FIXING OF THE STANDINC CHARGE BY A PUBLIC GAS SUPPLIER

'(1) A standing charge fixed by a public gas supplier shall in any one year rise no higher than the retail price index.

(2) Before a standing charge is fixed by a public gas supplier he shall notify the Director who shall investigate the components and levels of such a charge.

(3) Where in the light of such investigations the Director is satisfied.

(a) the services provided and paid for by the standing charge have been reduced; or

(b) the public gas supplier has achieved significant cost reductions in the components making up such a charge then the Director may give direction to the public gas supplier to reduce standing charges or to increase them by amounts in any one year less than the increase in the retail price index.'.—*[Mr. Rowlands.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Rowlands: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Few hon. Members will have failed to notice the growing anger, frustration and bitterness among an increasing number of consumers of gas and electricity about standing charges. During the past four years, while I have been an Opposition spokesman on energy, I have received many complaints and heard many arguments about standing charges. Indeed, enough pressure built up inside and outside the House to compel the Government to cajole the gas and electricity industries to introduce new codes on standing charges. The feelings of frustration, anger and bitterness come especially from the elderly. Sometimes, the cost of the gas that they consume is less than the cost of their standing charges.

As a result of the pressures, the gas and electricity councils introduced codes to govern standing charges and ensured initially that the charge would be no greater than the cost of gas consumed in any quarter. However, as hon. Members on both sides of the House will recognise, the gas and electricity industries were not enthusiastic supporters of the initial proposition and have tried to nibble away at the voluntary arrangements. That was the background to our debates in Committee on the Government's proposals for standing charges.

The new clause endeavours to ensure that standing charges will not increase by more than the rate of inflation. In some circumstances, and after the director general has investigated, the increases should be less than the rate of inflation. Indeed, in some cases there should be decreases in standing charges.

We tried to entice the Government into supporting a similar provision in Committee, but we failed. Unless we get satisfaction tonight, we shall press the new clause to a Division because of the weasel words that are used in a condition to the 25-year monopoly licence that will be given to British Gas. The condition attached to the proposed draft licence states that the supplier—British Gas — shall use its best endeavours to ensure that standing charges do not increase above the retail prices index. It does not say that the supplier will be unable to increase charges above the retail prices index; simply that he should use his best endeavours. The Opposition distrust those words. They are weasel words that could be used as a let-out, so that the supplier could wriggle out of the commitment which the Government believe they have established.

We distrust the condition, not only because of the words, but because of the information that we have received on the background to the condition. We understand that when the Bill was published last November, internal management documents from the BGC expected that the formula for standing charges in the draft licence would be RPI plus Z. The BGC expected, not unreasonably, that such a formula would be included in a draft licence. We were extremely suspicious when that was brought to our attention and we believe that, late in the day, the Government realised how much outrage would be caused by such a formula. As a result of the pressure that built up, the Government managed to obtain a compromise arrangement. The words "best endeavours"

are no more than a compromise between the condition wanted by the BGC—RPI plus Z—and the present formula for the condition attached to the licence.

We passionately believe that there is a case for ensuring statutorily that the upper increase limit on standing charges should be no higher than the increase in the retail prices index. However, we also believe—this relates to the other half of the new clause—that the director general should have the power to investigate the components of a standing charge. If he discovers that the supplier has made savings in services which are supposedly covered by the standing charge, he should recommend an increase less than the RPI, or a decrease.

Let me illustrate the point that I am trying to make. It is possible, and even probable, that British Gas plc will try to make savings on meter reading. Instead of reading meters quarterly, there will be longer periods between readings, estimates of bills will be sent to customers and the company will wait for customers to inform it of the correct amount. The result could be considerable savings. Meter staff and reading are two components of the standing charge, so if the director general discovered such savings, he could attribute them directly to the standing charge and suggest either a lower increase or a reduction in charges. There have also been many changes in meter technology and in the way in which supplies into our homes can be metered.

The Government might say that such savings are indirectly reflected on other aspects of the price formula, but where the savings can be related specifically to the components of a standing charge, they should reflect directly on increases or decreases in the charge. Therefore, the director general has a useful and important role to play in monitoring and investigating standing charges. If the public gas supplier can achieve significant cost reductions in the components of a standing charge, the director general may direct the supplier to reduce standing charges or at least to increase them by less than the increase in the retail prices index.

We are introducing some flexibility, not in the increase of standing charges above the RPI, but, where savings might be made, in the increase below the rate of inflation. We submit the new clause in a spirit of moderation and to respond to the growing feeling of frustration and anger felt by a large number of elderly consumers about the level of standing charges.

Miss Black has not been a notable critic of the Government; she has not been up front on many of these major issues. I hope that she and the Gas Consumers Council will support the arrangements that we propose, because we believe that we are justifiably responding to the feelings, demands, anger and bitterness about standing charges that have been made clear to the House in the past four years.

Mr. Rost: I am sorry to have to tell my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench that I am slightly tempted to support the Opposition's new clause, unless my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary can, somehow or other, dissuade me from doing so. I was one of those—there were a number on the Conservative Benches—who, on Second Reading, raised the question of standing charges. We were rather disturbed to see the wording in the draft authorisation as simply imposing on British Gas a requirement that it would use its "best endeavours" to keep increases below the rate of inflation. Some of us felt that that needed re-wording to make it a little more precise and forceful. I did not serve on the Committee, and I am surprised to find on Report that we have made no progress.

The Select Committee made recommendations on standing charges which the Government do not appear to have taken on board, and I find myself in something of a dilemma in supporting the Government. We know that there is a great deal of irritation about standing charges, particularly among low-income consumers, and I should have thought that it would be reasonable to provide, before fixing the standing charge, not only that the director general should be notified, but that he should be obliged to investigate whether the increase is justified.

Standing charges can be a skilful way of concealing rises in tariffs. If there are to be rises in tariffs through standing charges, there must be a way in which they can be prevented if British Gas says that it has acted in its "best endeavours" but requires more income and intends to get some through increased standing charges rather than through increased tariffs. That could have an undesirable impact on certain consumers.

Therefore, I hope that my hon. Friend, before the new clause is pressed to a Division, will make some much more reassuring noises than my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was able to do on Second Reading.

Mrs. Clwyd: My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) has made the case for our new clause forcefully. I draw the attention of the House, as I am sure it will be drawn later tonight, to the latest report of the Select Committee on Energy which talks about the unacceptable and shameful

> "lack of heat in poor homes this winter . . . a winter which should have concentrated the Government's mind both on the hardship and danger to life caused by unacceptable and shameful levels of fuel poverty."

In Committee, we made clear our concern about standing charges and their importance in fuel poverty. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security during a debate last year said:

> "energy prices . . . are for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy."

He spoke about:

> "the extent to which the cost of fuel is relevant to those on low incomes . . . Fuel is clearly a basic necessity, especially for the elderly and the sick. I recognise the concern that is felt by many on low incomes when it comes to paying for fuel."—[*Official Report*, 16 December 1985; Vol. 89, c. 134.]

8.15 pm

However, we know from the Social Security Bill that the Under-Secretary's understanding has lost the day, because the Bill proposes to abolish heating additions and single payments to help with fuel bills. We are concerned that the Gas Bill does not oblige British Gas to keep any increase in standing charges within the rate of inflation. We do not understand the phrase "best endeavours", despite the Minister's attempts to explain it in legal terminology in Committee. I am sure that no other Opposition Member understands that phrase and nor do members of the public.

Do the majority of Conservative Members have any understanding of what fuel poverty means to so many people? Evidence has been given time after time to the Select Committee on Energy from Age Concern and the National Right to Fuel Campaign about fuel poverty. How can the Government still shelter behind the phrase "best endeavours"? The National Right to Fuel Campaign gave detailed evidence about domestic gas disconnections,

[Mrs. Clwyd]

which it admitted were fewer than for electricity. However, there is worrying evidence, about which we should all be concerned, and the number of disconnections is still too high. They continue to occur in households for which alternative measures and aid would reduce hardship. Age Concern and the Child Poverty Action Group have shown that the present level of social security benefit given to low income households is inadequate to help those who experience difficulty in paying their fuel bills. We gave many such examples in Committee.

For example, at the beginning of last year an article in *The Guardian* talked about

"A 13-year-old boy whose mother and sister were found dead in the council flat where the heaters were cold, died in St. Thomas's Hospital, London, yesterday. He was found with his mother, aged 31."

Intense cold and the problems of paying for fuel bills are not associated only with the elderly. The family were living in a flat in central London. The article said that gas central heating in the flat was working two days before Mrs. Smith and Natasha were found dead, but a preliminary investigation after the family was found showed that the main jets would not ignite. Mrs Smith, a student, could have decided to do without heat

"because she had been worried about the prospect of mounting fuel bills."

As a result of that tragic case, various voluntary organisations pressed for more Government action to prevent hypothermia and other cold-induced illnesses. This country has a greater number of deaths from hypothermia than north America and north Europe. We should be thoroughly ashamed of that in this day and age.

Many of my constituents turn off the heat because they are afraid of the size of their fuel bills. I am referring not only to poor pensioners, those on supplementary benefit or the unemployed, but to relatively well-off pensioners, who are scared stiff about the size of their fuel bills. For all households who rely upon low incomes, the expenses incurred in paying their fuel bills are already high. Since the energy crisis in the late 1960s there have been escalating increases in electricity prices and Government-induced increases in gas prices.

Fuel poverty since 1979 has become even more prevalent. Both the Social Security Bill and the Gas Bill completely ignore the fact by refusing to recognise that fuel costs are incurred disproportionately and that low income households spend a greater percentage of their income on fuel than do higher income households. That is part of the reason for fuel poverty becoming so prevalent. The real needs of low income households in relation to fuel expenditure have not been recognised. If implemented in its present form without the Opposition amendment, the Bill will only compound this very serious problem.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I am left with only one or two minutes to speak because the Minister has to reply to this debate. It is disgraceful that a subject that is as important and serious as this for many thousands of our fellow citizens cannot be properly considered because of the operation of the guillotine.

I trust that the Government recognise that the proposal of my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) is sensible. It is free of the gobbledegook which disfigured the Government's earlier approach. There are standing charges not only for gas but for water, electricity, telephones, and so on. All of them present very serious problems. We are concerned that that problem should not be intensified.

Mr. David Hunt: The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) began by reminding the House that there were extensive discussions in Committee about standing charges. However, he referred again to the anger that is felt about standing charges. I have no alternative but to remind him that a wide ranging interdepartmental committee was set up by his right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). In February 1976, under the signature of the right hon Gentleman, who was then Secretary of State for Energy, it said:

"The Government asked an interdepartmental group of officials to review the scope for helping poor consumers by adjusting the structure of energy tariffs or by other means".

After considering the group's report the Government concluded that none of these possibilities offered a satisfactory way of helping poor consumers with their fuel bills. In paragraph 8, on the specific point raised by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, the interdepartmental committee concluded:

"We are satisfied that there is a sound case in economic principle for a tariff structure under which standing charges are maintained separate from the unit consumption charge."

The hon. Gentleman referred to the anger that is felt about standing charges. He should not try to rewrite the history books. If he is to be fair to the House of Commons tonight, he should remind hon. Members that it was a Labour Government who reached that conclusion.

The hon. Gentleman is right to remind the House that the clause deals mainly with limiting the increase, which is what this debate has been partly about, subject to other points that have been raised. But standing charges are only part of the price that is paid by the customer. The price formula that is set out in condition 3 of the draft authorisation covers both the standing charge and the rate per therm. Under that price formula, British Gas will have a clear incentive to achieve a real reduction in all the costs under its control, whether they be the costs recovered through the standing charge or through the rate per therm. Efficiency factor "X" in the formula ensures that customers will benefit from increased efficiency.

There is an important question as to the appropriate distribution of the total between the standing charge and the rate per therm. The Government believe that the fair approach is to prevent standing charges from rising faster than the rate of inflation. I note that the new clause adopts the same approach. However, to put that requirement into the legislation would limit the flexibility of the director general to propose adjustments to the regulatory controls in the light of changing circumstances. That is the reason for setting out appropriate regulatory requirements in the authorisation and providing in the Bill a mechanism for making amendments to the authorisation. The new clause would introduce unnecessary and undesirable inflexibility into the controls over standing charges. It is much better to leave the controls in the authorisation.

Mr. Lofthouse: Does the Under-Secretary of State recall that in his evidence to the Select Committee the Secretary of State was as much confused as everybody else about the words "best endeavours"? In reply to a question from me he said:

"In the Committee stage I shall be perfectly willing to examine this. That is my objective, although to you as a layman and to me as a layman this phrase sounds like 'If you can't make the effort, bad luck.'"

Mr. Hunt: I have not reached that point yet. I hope that the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) recognises that I have gone through the argument about why it is in the authorisation rather than in the Bill. That answers the points put to me by his hon. Friends. I have still to deal with the exact words.

The new clause also provides that the director general shall investigate the components and levels of such a charge. That, too, is unnecessary. The director general will have full powers to investigate the make up of the standing charge and he may call for any informaion that he believes is necessary. That is provided for in condition 7 of the draft authorisation. If he took the view that the controls on standing charges in the authorisation were producing results that were contrary to the interests of consumers, he would be able to take steps to rectify the situation by initiating a modification.

The final part of the new clause provides that if there have been significant cost reductions in the components making up such a charge, the director general may intervene. Under clause 14 of the Bill, in fixing tariffs British Gas must not show undue preference or discrimination. This means that standing charges must be fairly related to fixed costs, otherwise small consumers would either be subsidising or being subsidised by larger consumers. The allocation of cost is not an exact science. That is why, for the additional protection of customers, explicit control over standing charges is set out in condition 4.

I seek to convince my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost), as I was able to convince other Conservative Members, that the phrase "best endeavours" has a great deal of legal force. In Committee I quoted the case of IBM (UK) Ltd. against Rockware Glass Ltd. In that case the extent of the plaintiff's obligations to use best endeavours was described by Lord Justice Buckley as

"obliging the plaintiffs to be bound to take all those steps in their power which are capable of producing the desired results."

In Committee I quoted other cases. In all of those cases it is accepted that to use best endeavours imposes a clear obligation to comply with that requirement.

Condition 4 states clearly that the supplier shall use its best endeavours. That important provision is a satisfactory way of dealing with the matter. If, however, there were a significant reduction in fixed costs and this was not reflected in the balance between standing charges and the rate per therm, the director general could intervene to enforce the non-discrimination provision if he took the view that it was being infringed.

I realise that the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney cannot agree with me. Indeed, it would be asking too much of him suddenly to agree with me. However, if he reflects upon it for a moment, I think he will see that I have endeavoured to set out these arguments step by step, that his proposal is unnecessary and that it would remove much of the director general's ability to ensure that those who are paying standing charges are properly protected.

Mr. Bruce: Is the Under-Secretary of State able to assure the House that if the general price per therm was not being increased, or was not being increased in line with inflation, standing charges would be, at worst, increased at the same rate as the increase in unit cost, or preferably at less than that rate?

Mr. Hunt: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman understands what I have been saying. I have given a clear assurance. In the authorisation there is the provision, which my right hon. Friend repeated earlier, that standing charges will not be increased higher than the rate of inflation. That is clearly set out. The supplier shall use its "best endeavours" to ensure that. I have further assured him that—this is an important provision—the director general has an opportunity, if he feels that the balance is beginning to infringe the duty——

And it being half past Eight o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [17th February] and the Resolution this day, to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 188, Noes 230.

Division No. 105] **[8.30 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted

Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ray Powell and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fry, Peter
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Hawksley, Warren
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldfo'd)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irving, Charles
Key, Robert
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Woodcock, Michael
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tim Sainsbury and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 7

AUTHORISATION OF PUBLIC GAS SUPPLIERS

Mr. Rowlands: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 5, line 13 at end insert—

'(4) Before granting an authorisation, the Secretary of State shall require any public gas supplier, following consultations with the Director and the Council, to prepare codes of practice specifying

(a) the nature of service available to tariff customers in relation to gas supplied by the supplier;

(b) the conditions attached to the payment of gas bills including guidance to domestic customers if they have difficulty in paying; and

(c) the provision of special services for elderly and disabled persons and any public gas supplier shall arrange for the publication of such codes of practice, in such form and such manner as the Director may consider appropriate.

(5) The Director and the Council shall collect information on, and keep under review, all matters relating to such codes of practice under sub-section (4) above with respect to which the functions of the Director or the Council are exercisable.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments:

No. 5, in page 7, line 7 leave out subsection (13).

No. 7, in clause 9, page 8, line 33 at end insert—

'(2A) It shall also be the duty of a public gas supplier to employ a sufficient number of qualified staff trained to an appropriate standard to fulfill the obligations placed upon the supplier by Schedule 5 of this Act'.

No. 14 in clause 23, page 26, line 16 leave out subsection (1) and insert—

'The Director may modify, with the consent of the Secretary of State, conditions of a public gas supplier's authorisation in respect of conditions relating to prices and charges made by the supplier; and in respect of conditions relating to the level of service provided to customers.'.

No. 15, in page 26, line 38 leave out 'the consent of' and insert 'consulting'.

No. 42, in schedule 5, page 73, leave out lines 20 to 23 and insert—

'*(a)* seek an order from the court to cut off the supply to the premises by disconnecting the service pipe at the meter (whether the pipe belongs to the supplier or not) or by such other means as he thinks fit; and

(b) if such an order is granted recover any expenses incurred in so doing from the customer.

In deciding whether to make an order for the purpose of sub-paragraph *5(a)* above the court shall have regard to provisions of the Code of Practice for payment of bills.'.

No. 43, page 73, line 24, leave out subsection (6) and insert—

'(6) In this paragraph "the court" means the High Court or a county court and a county court shall have jurisdiction in the proceedings if the charges due do not exceed the county court limit.

(7) Where a public gas supplies has cut off the supply of gas to any premises as a result of an order made in accordance with subsection (5), the supplier shall not be under any obligation to resume the supply of gas to the customer until he has made good the default and paid the reasonable expenses of re-connecting the supply.'.

8.45 pm

Mr. Rowlands: One of the most constant and widespread criticisms, not only of the Bill, but of the Government's whole approach to privatisation, which has been reflected in our debates and in journals and newspapers, ranging from the *Financial Times* to the *Morning Star*, is that by privatising British Gas the Government will create a new monster private monopoly, while at the same time failing to provide any meaningful or effective regulation of it. That is the fundamental charge made against the Bill and the whole process of privatisation adopted by the Government.

In their turn, the Government have claimed that this private monopoly monster will be controlled by a combination of competition and regulation. However, for the vast majority of gas consumers competition will be non-existent. In Committee we investigated the Bill in detail, together with the draft conditions attached to the 25-year monopoly licence to be granted to the new BG plc. We found that the system of regulation, and the functions and powers given to the director general, would not provide any meaningful regulation or protection for consumers in key areas of consumer interest.

These amendments together with the next two sets of amendments, which I understand will be moved by the Chairman of the all-party Select Committee, go some way towards remedying the defects and towards giving some substance to the concept of regulation and the power of the director general.

Amendment No. 1 has been promoted by the Gas Consumers Council and is fully supported by it. It seeks to ensure that the gas supplier has to prepare a series of codes of practice specifying the nature of the service available to tariff customers and, in particular, the conditions attached to the payment of gas bills, including guidance to domestic customers if they have any difficulty in paying. The gas supplier is to provide a code that covers the provision of special services to the elderly and disabled. Such a code must be prepared following consultation with both the director general and the Gas Consumers Council. We believe that that is vital to the needs and interests of many consumers.

We fear, not that British Gas will not initially maintain a variety of voluntary codes, but that a future British Gas may decide to cut corners, to reduce services or to cut the number of meter reading staff, while not passing on those reduced costs of the consumer. We wish to ensure that the Bill gives statutory support to the idea of codes relating to the payment of gas bills or to the disconnection of supply for failure to pay them.

A voluntary code has been agreed. Some 35,000 gas consumers were disconnected in 1985 because of failure to pay their bills. Thus, we are not talking about something modest. It is necessary that codes of practice as outlined in the amendment should be in force and should be the subject of consultation. We strongly believe that the provisions laid down by the Government, in the conditions attached to the 25-year monopoly licence granted to British Gas, do not provide the full range of statutory support that is necessary for standards of customer service. Thus, we believe that the gas supplier should be compelled to prepare codes of practice specifying various things, and that they should be the subject of consultation with the director general and the council.

We also believe that the director general and the council should have the power to collect the information and to keep under review all matters relating to such codes of practice as are suggested in the proposed subsection (4). We place great emphasis on the ability to obtain and collect information, because of the experience of

[Mr. Rowlands]

telephone user groups in relation to British Telecom. Before privatisation BT issued a lot of information about problems, breakdowns and failures. However, after privatisation it used the cloak of commercial secrecy as an excuse for not providing such information.

We do not want those mistakes to be repeated. Consequently, it is vital that the director general and the council should have the power to collect information. British Gas should not feel, after privatisation, that it can wrap some of its information in a cloak of commercial secrecy, as BT has done. Therefore, there is a strong case for proposals such as those the Gas Consumers Council has suggested, which are incorporated in amendment No. 1.

In amendment No. 5 we go further in giving some power and meaning to the director general's role. We give the director general the power to modify, with the Secretary of State's consent, certain conditions that are attached to the licence in relation to prices, charges and the level of services. In Committee we debated some aspects of that. At present, the Bill allows the director general to do only two things: he can modify the licence if he obtains agreement from British Gas under clause 23, or, if he does not get agreement, he can modify it if he makes a recommendation to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which in turn takes the necessary decision.

We believe that saying that modification should occur only by agreement or through the elaborate procedure of reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission makes the Director General of Gas Supply a pathetic creature, without any meaningful power in the key areas. Apart from enforcing the existing arrangements or authorisations, all that he can do is to recommend changes, which have then to be submitted to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The director general's power is reduced to that of postman. Any of his recommendations to British Gas to modify a 25-year-old licence will have to be passed to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Anyone who has followed the activities of that commission in the last few months will wonder whether such a cumbersome outfit, already overstretched and coping with the merger mania which has struck us, is an appropriate body to deal with the range of probably modest modifications which cannot be achieved by agreement with British Gas. Is that not an incredibly cumbersome process?

We debated the matter in general in Committee, but we have returned with a modification of our own proposals. We suggest that the director general should have limited powers to modify a licence. We provide the safeguard that the director general must have the consent of the Secretary of State, but we believe that if Ofgas is to be set up, the only function of which is to consider complaints about gas supply, the director general should have the right to decide on modifications to a licence in relation to services, charges and prices — with the Secretary of State's consent. The director general should not be expected to pass his recommendations on to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which might know very little about the nature, background and reasons why such modifications of the licence are proposed.

The Government's plan will insert another tier of obstruction into the flexible arrangements which the Government describe as necessary. It will undermine the potential authority of a regulatory body. We plead with the Minister to reconsider this "either or nothing" arrangement. The director general has either to get agreement or pass on his recommendation to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. If we are to create the director general, we must give him a proper job to do. We should give him limited power to modify a licence and the conditions attached to it.

In Committee I explained how nonsensical it would be if, when the director general wanted to recommend a modification to the conditional connection charges, or to the codes for payments of bills or services, he had to refer this to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. That commission deals with other matters, such as competition. It does not normally consider the moderate and sensible modifications that might be proposed by the director general on charges, pricing and standards of service.

I hope that the Government will respond to our plea to make the director general and the Department more meaningful, with a reasonable set of functions. I hope that our plea will not fall on deaf ears as it did in Committee. We have a strong case for giving the director general more powers than are offered in the Bill.

Another amendment refers to safety, which we debated at length in Committee. We believed then, as we believe now, that the Government have made an exaggerated case, to the point of being bogus, in their claim to improve safety by reducing the statutory time given to British Gas to deal with gas escapes from 24 hours to 12 hours under schedule 5. The majority of regions respond within two hours to a gas escape report.

As important as the speed with which a gas escape is dealt is who deals with it. Will the person be equipped, trained and qualified to deal with it? Our amendment suggests that a duty be placed on the public gas supplier to ensure that such people are qualified and trained to a certain standard. We debated those standards at length in Committee when we discussed the training of staff.

Even before privatisation the problems and arguments are with us. The problems exist now, before the privatised company, which will be more interested in profit than service and might cut corners, is established.

I shall quote an extract from a letter from employees in Plymouth. It says:

"The Plymouth area of British Gas has not taken on an apprentice gas fitter for at least four years, and even if it were to do so it now would mean a gap of eight years before a qualified and certificated fitter became available. Within that eight-year period there has, and will be a reduction in the direct labour force due to retirement, ill health etc. Already contractors are being used to deal with peak work loads and if those employers are not inclined to set up their own apprenticeship schemes which should adhere to British Gas standards, where are the qualified persons to come from? We fear there is a great danger of cowboy operators, with limited knowledge, moving into the industry, perhaps producing sub-standard work which eventually could cause damage to life and limb, and of course property."

The letter suggests that I bring these fears to the attention of the appropriate committee. I bring it to the attention of the House. The letter concludes:

"a fully certified operator should be the only person allowed to fit and maintain any gas appliances. This should also apply to contractors engaged on mains and service work whose training programme leaves a lot to be desired."

Mr. Robert C. Brown: It is appalling that some gas depots have not employed an apprentice for four years. Is my hon. Friend aware that this is typical of area boards

throughout the country, and that in many instances many more years than four have passed since an apprentice was employed?

Mr. Rowlands: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for intervening. As we know, he has great knowledge of these matters.

I hope the Minister will not contend that we are engaging in scaremongering. I did not prompt the letter from which I have quoted. I have not been to Plymouth to arrange for such a letter to be written, and I have not sought to arouse the feeling which is expressed within it. I assure the House that the letter was written spontaneously. I hope that the Minister will heed the authentic words and views that have been set out on behalf of those who work in the industry.

Worries and concerns are being expressed before British Gas is privatised, and amendment No. 7 will impose a duty on public gas suppliers

"to employ a sufficient number of qualified staff trained to an appropriate standard to fulfil the obligations placed upon the supplier by Schedule 5 of this Act."

This is not a marginal issue, and it cannot be described as an academic consideration. We are discussing a factor which is central to safety issues.

9 pm

British Gas has tried to maintain high standards and it has a tremendous record of training apprentices. My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown) and many of his contemporaries are examples of the training that has been provided. We are worried about the deterioration in training standards. If the Government decide to embark upon a further privatisation measure and to create a new public company, we feel that the duty should be placed upon the company to ensure that training takes place and that a sufficient number of qualified and trained staff are available to meet the challenge of ensuring safety in future.

We are worried about an increase in the number of cowboys in the industry. There is great concern about some of the gas applicances, including gas cookers, which are being supplied. There is increased competition in the selling of gas cookers and a significant percentage of the 110,000 cookers that have been imported from the continent and elsewhere are not reaching the safety standards that have been set by British Gas. We know that strong statements have been issued by Ministers in the Department of Trade and Industry to the effect that unsafe goods constitute unsafe competition. We have not yet seen the draft regulations on the safety of appliances that have been promised, although we have pressed harder and harder for them to be produced and introduced.

There is a huge gulf between the Government's rhetoric, the words in the Bill, the conditions in the licence, the system of regulation and the powers that have been given to the Director General of Gas Supply. We do not believe that the draft licence that will be granted for 25 years will meet the needs as we see them. They will not meet the needs of the consumer. The Gas Consumers Council will be able only to advise on the presentation of some of the codes, as laid down in condition 14. That demonstrates how derisory and modest is the role of the council in preparing and drafting codes that will be of great concern to domestic gas consumers.

We believe in strengthening the statutory backing of the codes, in strengthening the role of the Gas Consumers Council and the director general in the preparation of the codes, and in giving the director general important and useful functions by being able to modify the licence without embarking on the enormously cumbersome procedure of making recommendations to yet another quango, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. For all these reasons, I hope that the Minister, even at this late stage, will accept some of the arguments that we have been advancing.

Mr. Bruce: I shall speak briefly on amendments Nos. 42 and 43, which I tabled and to which the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) has been addressing himself. Although this may not be apparent at first sight, the amendments are designed to provide protection for those who have difficulties in meeting the payment of their bills and are faced with disconnection. Even under the present system, consumers can be disconnected in circumstances which would be regarded as unjust and unfair and which aggravate the difficulties being experienced. We need a service that is designed to try to help consumers cope with their difficulties. In most instances there is not a refusal or a show of unwillingness to pay. Instead, there is more often than not genuine financial hardship that leads to difficulty or inability to pay.

It is argued — in my view quite rightly — that consumers who are in difficulties should be faced with court action. I am not encouraging British Gas or any gas authority to take court action. Instead, I am trying to avoid the circumstances which arise now and which could become worse under a private company that will face, perhaps, more commercial pressures. I am trying to avoid arbitrary disconnections which do not relate to a code of practice. I do not want consumers who face difficulties enough being confronted with what would seem to them to be abrupt disconnection.

The basis of the amendments is not abstract. They are based on considerable evidence and experience over the years, which I am sure is shared by many hon. Members, of people who have suffered considerably as a result of arbitrary disconnection in circumstances in which it should not have happened. As I do not wish to detain the House unduly, I will give just one example.

Last year, a London consumer who had been away for six months received an estimated bill. He queried the estimate, but while he was awaiting a reply he received a second bill — not an unfamiliar experience — and the supply was then disconnected although there was a two-month old baby in the house and the consumer had offered to pay the £59 that he owed. He was then asked to pay not just the amount that he owed, but a reconnection fee, although I am sure that hon. Members would agree that the supply should never have been disconnected. Apart from anything else, it seems extremely dangerous to disconnect a house in which there is such a young baby, and I do not believe that that would have been done even by the electricity industry. The consumer had said that he had been away, he had queried the bill, and he had offered to pay the amount that he owed. To disconnect the supply in those circumstances seems arbitrary and heartless in the extreme.

The amendments would require the gas board to take court action, so the circumstances that I have described could not have arisen. The time needed to take court action would have ensured that the circumstances were brought

[Mr. Bruce]

to light and would have given the advice and aid agencies time to provide a legal defence if necessary or to ensure that the case did not proceed in view of the circumstances. In fact, the details of the case that I have described were provided by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux. At present, because there is no legal requirement to the contrary, the supplier can disconnect the supply without recourse to law, resulting in the injustices and uncertainties to which I have referred. In the case that I have cited, the disconnection was unfair and unjust, but no harm was done. It is not difficult, however, to imagine circumstances in which disconnection could have serious consequences, for example, for an old person or a household with very young children and without any alternative form of heating in very cold weather.

I believe that the requirement that disconnection should be undertaken only after court action would be welcomed by many people. It is quite wrong for people who have no direct dealings with cases of this kind to assume that people do not pay their bills because they are unwilling recidivists and wish to defraud the gas board. The evidence shows that in 99 per cent. of cases it is because people are experiencing genuine hardship and real financial difficulty. Those people need help. They certainly do not need an abrupt and arbitrary withdrawal of essential supplies.

I can understand why some hon. Members would rather the courts were not involved, but the purpose of the amendments is to protect the individual by making it clear that the gas authority cannot disconnect any consumer, even if bills have not been paid, without taking the matter to court where all the facts and arguments can be considered and it can be clearly determined whether the person is simply refusing to pay or has genuine difficulties which can be much better resolved by the various aid and support agencies. I commend these as fair, balanced and reasonable amendments.

Amendment 43 makes it quite clear that, where it is proved that the person has not paid the bill because of unwillingness or refusal to pay or where there are no circumstances which justify extra aid or help, the consumer will not get his supply reconnected until the bill has been settled. That seems to be reasonable because it puts an onus on both sides. In my view, the amendments would ensure that those facing real difficulites or hardship would be removed from the threat of arbitrary disconnection and would have the protection of the courts to ensure that they could not have their gas supply terminated unless it was conclusively proved that they were guilty of an offence. I think that that would very much improve the present position. I commend the amendments to the House.

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): My justification for speaking briefly in this debate is my former membership of a consumer council, albeit, I admit, not in the gas industry but in the electricity industry. However, I think that there are some important similarities between the two and I hope that on that basis I shall be allowed to say a few words.

The Opposition have tonight demonstrated more than anything else their fundamental disagreement with the principle of privatisation. That can be no surprise to any of us. They seek, therefore, to surround a Bill such as this with the kind of controls which a new private company does not need in order to be successful. It is interesting that the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), sought information on faults and instanced the example of British Telecom. I am hopeful that there will be a general improvement in the performance of British Gas when it becomes a private company. I do not look for information on the bad things but an improvement which will be demonstrable to all consumers. I think that that says something about the attitude of the Opposition.

It is unfortunate that the Opposition regard the British Gas of the future as a monster. I think that that was the word used by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney. Why should it be a monster? Why is there this deep-rooted suspicion that the new private company will want to cut back on services? I should be interested to know why that should be. To take the example of the disconnection code of practice which the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) mentioned, it seems to me that it is in the interest of a private company to maintain the best possible relationship with its customers in order to maintain good public relations. In the long term, those customers will pay for the success and profitability of the company. It seems extremely unlikely that the company would want to cut people off until all other methods of achieving payment had been tried. Certainly, it may go to the courts but I would have thought that the last thing the company would want would be to disconnect a consumer, because the gas industry is not such a monopoly as some hon. Members have suggested. It always has the competition of the electricity industry. A person who cooks by gas can transfer to electricity if he does not like the service which is being provided by the gas industry.

The fears which the attitude of the Opposition have raised deserve some form of answer from the Government. I take it as natural that in the future the industry will want to provide, for example, special services for the elderly and disabled. Services currently provided include free safety checks and special appliance adaptors. Research should continue into new facilities such as special meters for the blind. I hope that we are all of one mind in seeing that as the right way to go in the future. Is my right hon. Friend the Minister of State satisfied with the assurance that he has been given by the British Gas Corporation that it intends to continue along those lines in future?

9.15 pm

Despite my right hon. Friend's confidence about the industry's future behaviour, confidence that I share, what would happen if there were changes, and if the fears that have been expressed tonight turned out to be justified? Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that the protection for the elderly and disabled would be maintained? Who would the consumer go to first with his complaint? Does my right hon. Friend expect to see the same dedicated band of men and women who currently serve the consumer councils at local level continuing in the future through the flexible arrangements that are being introduced in the Bill? It would bring considerable comfort to many of those who have been frightened by the Opposition's campaign against the Bill to be given an assurance tonight. I invite my right hon. Friend to say how the Government would react if some of those fears turned out to be justified.

Mr. Pike: I agreed with the hon. Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) when he said that the Opposition have made

it clear from the start that they are totally opposed to privatisation. That is exactly our position. I regret that I did not agree with most of the other conclusions that he reached.

In spite of our total opposition to privatisation, throughout the debate, as an Opposition, we have tried to pursue three aims—to protect our national energy, to protect the consumer interest and to protect the industry's employees. This group of amendments is aimed at protecting the interests of consumers.

The hon. Member for Swindon referred to the monopoly. British Gas will have a monopoly for the average gas consumer. Throughout the Committee, it was made clear that in most gas appliance sales, British Gas has a near monopoly at present and will continue to have one after privatisation. The hon. Member for Swindon said that a person with a gas cooker could easily go out and buy an electric cooker. He failed to recognise what sort of people we are trying to protect with the amendments that we are debating. Even those on a reasonably good wage cannot afford to suddenly go out and buy a new gas or electric cooker without difficulty—it is an expensive item. Therefore, it is unrealistic to say that there is competition.

Mr. Robert C. Brown: What about central heating?

Mr. Pike: I was going to mention that. Once someone has installed gas central heating, he is bound to that system for some time. Even if the boiler needs to be changed, the average person cannot suddenly say, "I have had enough of British Gas. I want to transfer to oil or coal." Therefore, in many respects, British Gas will continue to have a monopoly. It is right that we should put into the Bill and into primary legislation consumer protection.

We have now reached a stage where we can predict Ministers' replies to our debates. They say that we do not need to put provisions into primary legislation because what Opposition Members are seeking would be in the interests of British Gas, and would be done anyway. We disagree with the Government. We believe that the Bill's provisions must be strengthened to give consumers the safeguards we seek.

Amendment No. 7 states that a public gas supplier must
"employ a sufficient number of qualified staff trained to an approporiate standard".
There is no reason for the Government not to accept that, but the Minister is almost certain to state that the public gas suppliers will employ a sufficient number of such staff. If he believes that, he should accept the amendment because it will not change the position. However, we believe that this provision should be written into the Bill to ensure that a sufficient number of trained staff are employed. It is important in dealing with such a highly volatile material as gas to have properly trained staff to ensure that work is properly carried out and that consumers are fully safeguarded. I see no reason why the Government should refuse to accept amendment No. 7.

Subsection (4)*(b)* in amendment No. 1 refers to
"the payment of gas bills including guidance to domestic customers if they have difficulty in paying".
That is an extremely important provision. No doubt the Minister will say that British Gas plc will continue to publicise details of the codes of practice. We believe that this provision will ensure that the public gas suppliers will do that properly.

The Labour party has never pretended that, because British Gas is publicly owned, everything is perfect and there is no need for improvements. We have tried on a number of times to make improvements. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) pointed out that in 99 per cent. of cases it was a matter not of people deliberately refusing to pay their bills but of people not being able to afford to pay them and thereby having to make the difficult choice of whether to provide heating or food at the weekends. Often they are the people who are at least able to defend themselves and to understand what protection and facilities are available to assist them.

As we know, many people do not understand how to claim payments under the exceptionally severe weather regulations. Many people operated their heating systems at low levels during the very cold weather in February but they suddenly found that assistance was available if their heating bills were higher than they were a year ago. In many cases heating bills will not be higher because people deliberately turned down or turned off the heating because they were afraid that they could not meet their bills. Some people have paid the penalty and died from hypothermia. That is why protection must be clearly written into the Bill.

Subsection (4) *(c)* refers to
"the provision of special services for elderly and disabled persons".
We should ensure that privatised British Gas assists the elderly and disabled people. There should be no doubt about their position. The Minister may say that British Gas plc will undertake all these measures anyway and that, therefore, these provisions are not necessary. That is not satisfactory. If the Minister believes that, he should accept some of the Labour party's amendments. I believe that these are sensible, moderate amendments which only strengthen the position and try to give the public the protection to which the Labour party believes they are entitled.

Mr. Michael Cocks: The speech of the hon. Member for Swindon (Mr Coombs) was a parliamentary gem. He said that we were raising a bogy man, and he huffed and puffed and blew the matter up so large that in the end he frightened himself to death. He ended by pleading with the Minister to give him some assurances that he could take back to his constituency to satisfy the disadvantaged and the disabled so that they would not be frightened.

These amendments reveal the difference in philosophy between the two sides of the Chamber. My hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) said that we do not argue that the existing gas structure is beyond criticism. However, some flexibility exists. We know that if we get in touch with the gas authorities, we shall get some satisfaction in respect of the complaints that we raise.

Only this morning, like my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), I received a letter from a lady who said that she was being asked to pay £11 to have her meter emptied. It has not been emptied for 15 weeks and contained between £150 and £200. She was afraid of a burglary, because she was going on holiday and had already been burgled once. She is a 66-year-old pensioner and fosters a child for Mencap. I am quite sure that when I telephone the office of the chairman of the south-west gas board tomorrow discretion will be used and that something will be done about this case. Can we really believe that the use of such discretion will be extrapolated into the new situation that the Government are creating?

The Minister should think hard before rejecting these amendments, because they go to the heart of the matter.

[Mr. Michael Cocks]

It is not that the present gas structure is a large bureaucratic organisation, because it contains people who are not entirely wedded to the profit motive. We said in Committee that there was an inherent tension between the maximisation of profit and the rendering of a public service, and we are afraid that that will be eroded. I therefore hope that the Minister will give us some reassurance, and even set at rest the mind of the hon. Member for Swindon. This is an extremely important detailed human point.

Mr. Hardy: My right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) has made an important point. We are seeking to maintain the civilised and caring approach that exists in the gas industry. We want to see it continue, even though the pressure to maintain or enhance profit may become very strong.

My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) advanced a powerful case. He appeared in the most reasonable manner to be appealing to the Government just this once to drop their hitherto hard approach and to recognise that, although they are maintaining a pretence that they wish to stand aside from the economy, they are still sitting in the directors' box. Unfortunately, the referee, in the person of the director of Ofgas, has been given neither rules to follow nor an effective whistle to blow. We want his position to be important, if only to protect the people to whom my right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South referred.

The last debate was sadly curtailed because of the guillotine. We did not even get a complete response from the Under-Secretary. I know that he would have replied very fully to that brief debate, but he was prevented by the guillotine — a form of political suicide that I find deplorable.

That debate was relevant to this one, because it was an expression of our concern for the hundreds of thousands of people who are in need. They are the sort of people whom the hon. Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) may not have been thinking of when he said that they could easily switch from a gas cooker to an electric one. Such people cannot afford to buy another very expensive appliance simply because they are currently dissatisfied with one supplier. The hon. Gentleman may not think that it is particularly expansive, but thousands of the constituents of Opposition Members cannot afford to buy a different appliance. Thousands of people, indeed probably millions, are like that. They will not reap any benefit from privatisation. They cannot join the rush to make a great deal of money because they do not have money to accumulate or to buy shares, or capital to invest. They have problems of considerable intensity, which is why we have considerable sympathy with the arguments of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce).

I accept that the hon. Gentleman is a trifle more mechanistic in his approach to the needy, in seeking to establish the structures by which disconnections can be achieved. Our concern is to ensure that a proper code of practice exists, and that a caring element is engendered in the gas industry to prevent disconnections as often as possible. We are grateful that the hon. Gentlemn has taken part in the debate, unlike the other half of the alliance. The debate has continued for nearly six hours, yet no SDP Member has been present. This shows how greatly the SDP is concerned about the millions of people for whom we speak.

My hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) expressed our concern for the needy. Their numbers are growing. The number of unemployed is substantial, and the figures that the Government produce are only a small part of the whole story. The number of elderly people is also substantial. The Government are well aware from our arguments in Committee during this particularly bitter winter how serious the problem is. Because the problem is serious and extensive, it is absolutely necessary to have a code of practice and for the director general to have a meaningful position. Unless the groundwork for rules and practices is laid down, the director general's position is nebulous.

If the Government do not go some way along the road which my hon. Friend advocated, no responsible person will wish to accept that important job. However, it can be important only if it is meaningful, and in the present circumstances without the proper code of practice the job may have the characteristics of cotton wool. Society has serious needs and we should not restrict ourselves simply to making money. The maintenance of a proper service is also essential.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: We have had a useful debate on a wide range of topics, some of which we considered in Committee. The Opposition do not have a monopoly of compassion and caring. I wholly understand, as do all hon. Members, the problem that our constituents occasionally face in relation to some of the matters that we have discussed. Therefore, the motivation to ensure the provision of care for the less well-off and those who are less well able to defend themselves is an objective that is certainly shared on both sides of the House.

We begin to part company on the best ways of achieving that. The amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhynmey (Mr. Rowlands) adopts a more structured approach, as does the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), than exists at present. The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney asked about the codes of practice. It is important to be clear precisely what they are, how they can be applied and how changes can take place. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) raised that point.

Clause 7 enables the Secretary of State to include conditions in the authorisation granted to a public gas supplier covering a wide range of matters. Condition 12 of the draft authorisation requires British Gas to publish codes of practice on the nature of the gas supply service available to tariff customers and on the matter which dominated the debate—the payment of bills. I accept that the codes of practice do not come into effect immediately on the authorisation, and that there is a gap after the passage of the Bill, but there will be plenty of time for them to be in place before British Gas plc comes into operation.

Condition 12 requires British Gas to consult the director general and the council in the event of a substantive revision to the codes of practice. I emphasise that it is a draft authorisation, and we have debated fully some of its provisions. We shall reflect on some of the points that have been raised about the final draft authorisation.

Mr. Rowlands: The Minister says that he will reflect upon the matter. We have raised this issue almost from Second Reading. Our fundamental complaint about condition 12 is that paragraph 2 confines the process of consultation to the presentation of each code. Will the Minister give a firm commitment that that will be revised to include a provision about the substance of each code, not just its presentation? That has caused great offence.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The hon. Gentleman forgets that British Gas has made it clear that it will continue its present codes of practice. Those codes are clear, and I have heard no criticism in the House of how they operate. I have not been satisfied of the Opposition's case by the debate, but I shall continue to reflect on the authorisation. If the existing codes are continued, there may be a question of how the codes should operate. If there is a change in their operation, we must know what procedures will be used to deal with that.

Mr. Robert C. Brown: Throughout the debate, Ministers have quoted assurances given by British Gas. British Gas will have no more power than Her Majesty's Government to dictate to British Gas plc after privatisation unless the power is written into the statute.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I was about to respond to the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon. The director general and the consumers council will play a role in the operation of the codes. The Opposition have overlooked that point. The council will wish to investigate any representations about standards of service, and if it seems to the director general that British Gas is falling short, he can modify the authorisation. I assure my hon. Friend that, in the event that the codes are not operated properly, the director general has the power to modify the authorisation. The new Gas Consumers Council will monitor the operation of the code of practice on the payment of bills, just as the existing council does.

That shows the fundamental difference between the two sides of the House. As my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon said, the Labour party wishes to overstructure the position and make the codes of practice over-rigid. It cannot be in the interests of British Gas, if it is to be successful, not to fulfil the undertakings that it has given.

We are concerned about the special needs of the elderly and disabled, as we said in Committee, and the BGC has said that it will continue free safety checks for the elderly. On the needs of the disabled, it is our intention that at least one member of the Gas Consumers Council should have experience of this sector. The code on this has worked successfully, although we can all give examples of where individual cases may have gone awry, and I have not heard any criticism from either side of the House that the code of practice has not worked satisfactorily.

We have an undertaking from the BGC that it will continue the codes, and there is an assurance that if it does not continue to operate those codes satisfactorily, the matter can be taken up by the Gas Consumers Council and by the director general, and modification of the code can be required. It is better to achieve proper standards in this way than by the overstructuring suggested by the amendments.

Mr. Rogers: Does not the Minister understand that in Committee we were attempting to tell him that what exists now is not necessarily what will exist after vesting day? He is still telling us that he has had assurances today from British Gas, but that is British Gas as a public company, responsible, through the Secretary of State, to Parliament. It is not British Gas plc, which will be a private company and responsible only to its shareholders — that is the critical difference. By introducing the amendments, we are not attempting to overstructure. We are anxious only to ensure that there will be a statutory basis for the protection of consumers after vesting day. The Minister must accept that any assurances given now are not binding on British Gas plc.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The hon. Gentleman cannot have been listening to what I was saying. We are privatising British Gas, but with the same management. The hon. Gentleman is saying that that management's assurances are worthless.

Mr. Rogers: Absolutely.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I happen to disagree. It is a responsible management, and I believe that it will honour the undertakings that it has given. However, I have made it clear that if it fails to do so, and it falls short on other practices, it is open to the Gas Consumers Council to take up the matter in the event of complaints from consumers, and to report to the director general, who can initiate the modification procedure.

Amendments Nos. 14 and 15 are about procedure for modification. Again, we come to a fairly fundamental difference between the two sides of the House. Clause 23 deals with modification in circumstances where the public gas supplier consents to modifications being made. There have been criticisms of our procedures of reference, when there is not consent, to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, saying that it is too cumbersome and top-heavy. I do not think it is because it is the protector in cases of monopoly abuse. If modifications need to be made, this body, much more than the director general, can review the position not only of British Gas, but of monopoly measures more generally. The MMC has much more experience than the director general. This is, therefore, a reasonable way to approach the matter. First, there should be consultation. In the case of supplies to tariff customers the Monopolies and Mergers Commission route should be used, where agreement is not possible, or if the director general decides that an investigation is desirable. The director general may feel that it is best to use that body because it has the qualifications and the experience to investigate the matter. I accept that our approach is fundamentally different from that of the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), but I hope that my hon. Friends will not support this amendment.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney also referred to safety and asked two questions specifically in the context of training. The first was whether the number of staff available will be adequate to deal with the responsibilities of British Gas in connection with emergencies, repairs and other safety matters. His second question related to staff qualifications. British Gas has always said that its level of recruitment will vary from year to year, according to the demands that are placed upon it. It cannot guarantee necessarily to employ the same number of staff each year to deal with the specific questions that were referred to by the hon. Gentleman. However, any changes that are made are introduced after consultation

[Mr. Buchanan-Smith]

with the employees and their trade unions. I referred in Committee to the fact that in its privatisation report No. 6 British Gas made it clear that consultation will continue.

Failure by a public gas supplier to comply with the obligations placed upon it by paragraphs 1 to 4 of schedule 5 are enforceable by the director general under the clause 28 powers. Failure to prevent escapes of gas within 12 hours is a criminal offence under paragraph 13 of schedule 5. It will be necessary, therefore, for British Gas to maintain its level of recruitment and training in order to fulfil its obligations. An explicit duty of the kind proposed in the amendment is unnecessary.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney may believe that it will be worth while for him to pursue with the chairman of British Gas the particular instance that he quoted this evening, but I think that British Gas has a good training record. It has an annual recruitment policy and it provides formal training and practical experience for all of its recruits. This ensures that tasks that must be performed under schedule 5 to ensure safety are always performed by competent and experienced staff. British Gas has developed its training programmes on an entirely voluntary basis. There is no reason to suppose that after privatisation there will be any diminution in the British Gas Corporation's commitment to recrutiment and to training adequate members of staff to fulfil its obligations.

The hon. Member for Gordon dealt with disconnections in amendments Nos. 42 and 43. Disconnections are serious. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving the House another opportunity to discuss the problem. He knows that public gas suppliers, like the British Gas Corporation, will be under a statutory obligation to supply the vast majority of their domestic consumers. Customers already have 35 days in which to pay their bills before action to disconnect the supply is taken. It would be unfair, and could be economically damaging to the industry, to remove the ultimate sanction—I know that the hon. Gentleman is not going that far, but this is worth saying—of disconnection where statutory supply obligations arise. It is against that background that we must view disconnections.

The involvement of the courts could have two consequences. First, the customer's debt could be increasing during the time that the court action would take because obviously there will be an interval between the time of the reference to the courts and the time when the court examines and decides the case. Secondly, one could run the risk of a significant new burden being placed on the courts. Courts are already involved in a number of disconnection cases where entry for that purpose is refused. In those circumstances, a magistrate's warrant has to be obtained and before granting such a warrant he has to be satisfied that a right exists and that the requirements of the relevant enactment have been complied with. Therefore, that provides consumers with a valuable protection against wrongful disconnection. That element of protection does not go as far as the hon. Gentleman would seek, but he is going further than is necessary.

In condition 12 of the code of practice to which I have already referred British Gas is under an obligation to publish a code of practice on the payment of bills, including guidance to domestic consumers if they have difficulty in paying. We envisage that the new Gas Consumers Council will monitor the operation of that code in the same way that the National Gas Consumers Council does now. In the disconnection cases that I have had to handle in my constituency the role of the National Gas Consumers Council, which will continue, is a useful and helpful one. British Gas has publicly stated its commitment to the continuation of the code and it will follow its provisions and draw it to the attention of customers in difficulty before taking any decision to disconnect.

Therefore, the framework that we have provided in schedule 5 for the recovery of gas charges is reasonable and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will think about it in the light of what I have said and perhaps withdraw the amendment.

The House will realise that I share the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon. I have sympathy with the motivation behind almost all the amendments in making sure that the less well-off consumer and the consumer less well able to stand up for his own interests is properly protected. In the light of the commitments from British Gas that there will be codes of practice and that any abuse of them can be monitored and investigated by the new Gas Consumers Council, and ultimately that the director can introduce a modification if the codes of practice are not seen to work, our approach is the better one and does not need to be structured in the way that the amendments have suggested.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 187, Noes 224.

Division No. 106] **[9.55 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo	Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Corbett, Robin
Anderson, Donald	Corbyn, Jeremy
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Ashdown, Paddy	Craigen, J. M.
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Crowther, Stan
Ashton, Joe	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Cunningham, Dr John
Bagier, Gordon A. T.	Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Barnett, Guy	Deakins, Eric
Barron, Kevin	Dormand, Jack
Beckett, Mrs Margaret	Douglas, Dick
Beith, A. J.	Dubs, Alfred
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Duffy, A. E. P.
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*	Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Bermingham, Gerald	Eadie, Alex
Bidwell, Sydney	Eastham, Ken
Blair, Anthony	Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*	Ewing, Harry
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*	Fatchett, Derek
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*	Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Bruce, Malcolm	Fisher, Mark
Buchan, Norman	Flannery, Martin
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.	Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*	Forrester, John
Campbell, Ian	Foster, Derek
Campbell-Savours, Dale	Foulkes, George
Canavan, Dennis	Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Carter-Jones, Lewis	Freud, Clement
Cartwright, John	Garrett, W. E.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	George, Bruce
Clarke, Thomas	Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Clay, Robert	Godman, Dr Norman
Clelland, David Gordon	Golding, John
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Gould, Bryan
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*	Gourlay, Harry
Cohen, Harry	Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Conlan, Bernard	Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*

Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Don Dixon.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Fry, Peter
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irving, Charles
Key, Robert
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David

Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Ian Lloyd (Havant): I beg to move, amendment No. 2, in page 6, line 12, at end insert—

'*(d)* conditions requiring the public gas supplier to encourage the efficient use by consumers of gas supplied through pipes, by means of advocacy, advice, and, where economic, the provision of loans for energy efficiency investments;'.

Mr. Speaker: With this we shall take amendment No. 6, in page 8, line 27, Clause 9 at end insert—

'*(aa)* to promote the efficient use by consumers of gas supplied through pipes;'.

Mr. Lloyd: I begin by thanking all those who served on the Select Committee on Energy which produced the first report for 1985-86 on the regulation of the gas industry. I thank those hon. Members who helped to conduct the Select Committee inquiry and who served as members of the Standing Committee. I think that energy knows no greater devotion than that.

So anxious were the Government to make progress that the sittings of the Standing Committee began before the Select Comitee had completed its inquiry and reported to the House. That complicated, but did not exactly thwart, our proceedings. It would have been tidier and more logical—always desirable criteria—if our deliberations in Committee had followed the publication of the Select Committee's report and, perhaps even more importantly, the publication of the government's reply. None the less, my hon. Friends the Members for Rochford (Dr. Clark) and for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo), who were well supported by the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse), who referred to my report at one stage as his bible and was described as the Select Committee's shop steward in Committee, ensured that the Select Committee's views were heard regularly.

As always, if I judge correctly from the 1,338 columns of *Hansard* in Committee, though those views were heard with attention and courtesy—we always expect no less from my right hon. and hon. Friends who sit on the Treasury Bench—for the most part the trumpets were sounded in vain, which is not an unusual state of affairs. I say "for the most part" because the Committee welcomed the evidence that the Government were prepared to accept a number of the Select Committee's principal recommendations, even though it was not until 1,164 columns of debate had been printed in *Hansard* that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Energy announced, whether with pride or with shame— it is difficult to discern which—that a few pieces of plaster had been knocked off the walls of Jericho.

The purpose of the amendments is to knock off a few more pieces of plaster. We have no unreasonable ambitions to cause the walls to collapse. Indeed, we consider—at least, some of us do—that the walls are rather good, or perhaps that the city inside is worth defending. If the city of privatisation is to be defended, it might as well be defended properly. The amendments are concerned primarily with the concept of the efficient use of energy. That was described as a common aim of the Select Committee and of the Department of Energy. We are all against sin and all for energy efficiency. We are aware that energy efficiency features in many of our reports and many of the reports that are produced by the Department, and are the subject of favourable comment in the press. We have endeavoured to obtain by the amendments a somewhat clearer and more formal recognition of the subjective.

The Select Committee recommendations are highly relevant. Paragraph 65 concluded that the

"national case for promoting energy efficiency must . . . be one of the determining principles in setting the statutory framework for the regulatory authority which will control the new private-sector corporation."

and that it was

"'Quite inconceivable' that the energy efficiency would not be 'built into' the consideration of the regulatory authority."

The purpose of the amendments is to achieve just that little bit more building in. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State stated in Committee that when regulation is appropriate it should be clear, strong and firm. The Select Committee certainly believes that this is such a case and that the Government's declared policy could therefore be reinforced without creating the unnecessary bureaucracy and constraint so properly feared in all parts of the House.

The Government's response, however, in Cmnd. 9759, was that

"the imposition on the energy supply industries of a statutory duty . . . would add little to the industries' already extensive energy efficiency activities."

It continued:

"In returning British Gas to the private sector, the Government would not want to impose upon it unnecessary statutory obligations which go beyond those that apply to normal Companies Act companies. The Gas Bill places upon the Director a duty to carry out his functions in such a way as to promote the efficient use of gas."

The comments of the Select Committee, which I certainly share, are that it is rather strange to describe the new company as a normal Companies Act company. Whatever else it may be—and doubtless it will be many things—it is certainly not that.

Secondly, the statement that the director general needs clear, relevant and appropriate powers certainly applies in this case. We wish to stress that. And when regulation is appropriate it should be clear, strong and firm, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State suggested.

Where there are strong reasons for stating and achieving such an objective, the duty of the Director General of Gas Supply should, in our judgment, be matched by clear-cut, relevant and appropriate powers defined in the statute. In our view, the director general cannot achieve that objective unless the corporation has a complementary statutory obligation. The prize is large, the stakes are modest and the risk of failure is small. If the nettle of indifference is firmly grasped, the objective can certainly be achieved.

One more question—is it impractical? We do not think so. The Association for the Conservation of Energy probably provides the most relevant remarks in this context. Commenting in its memorandum to the Select Committee on the situation in California, which is similar in area and population to the United Kingdom with perhaps an even larger gross national product, the association said that

"the utilities are the best vehicle available to organise and implement policies promoting energy efficiency, particularly in the domestic market. Elsewhere in the United States, Public Utility Commissions have insisted upon the adoption and publication by the utilities of annual programmes of conversation investment, and equally regular reports of their associated achievements."

That seemed to me to be a very clear and decisive comment on the whole area of regulation and what can and cannot be done.

If energy wastage in the United Kingdom is, as we are informed and as the Government admit—I do not think

[Mr. Lloyd]

that there is any dispute about the amount—about £7 billion, and if the proportion wasted in houses is about £2 billion, there is plenty of room for what might be described as a little policy overkill. That, I think, is all that can be said of these two amendments.

10.15 pm

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): One of the outstanding features of the work of the Select Committee on Energy has been the recognition of the Secretary of State's enthusiasm for energy efficiency. We have accorded to the present Secretary of State not only our fullest support, but, out of step with the normal practice of criticism, we have underlined our enthusiasm for his influence in this area through the work of the Energy Efficiency Office. It is in that spirit that we should be seeking to gain the support of the Secretary of State in what is an interesting amendment but, nevertheless, an essential one.

Of course, British Gas plc may well say that these matters are self-evident. It may say that it can give advice about energy efficiency and that it will be the best advocate in the United Kingdom for the proper use of what it supplies. It may say, "Of course we will provide the right investment programme to meet the objectives that the amendment appears to have". That is not the point. We do not yet know what the animal will be like.

The present management will certainly, for a short time, project the standards and the purposes of British Gas. We are proud of British Gas, but some years will pass, new management will take over, and it is not without experience in the House that we are able to say that often new policies provide different economies which are sometimes harmful to essential parts of an industry.

We have seen that happen in the private sector on many occasions, often in research and development. The programme of investment diminishes if there are serious strictures on the economy in a particular financial year. Therefore, we are saying that the Secretary of State is not taking on board more than he advocates himself in accepting this set of amendments. Certainly we would like to see the provision of loans for energy efficiency investment.

It is clear that in the domestic and commercial sector, especially the latter, we have some reluctance to deal with energy efficiency. The hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Lloyd) referred to the enormous losses involved in the use of gas in spite of the advocacy of British Gas and its present chairman. Therefore, there is much to be done.

For the sake of brevity I shall underline what the Chairman of the Select Committee has said. The proposals that have been put before the Secretary of State in our recent report make it abundantly clear that we are keen to have the Government take on board what is good common sense and certainly good national housekeeping. We have to do much to conserve our energy resources and the response from the Government hitherto has not been encouraging. We are puzzled that the Secretary of State has an abundance of enthusiasm for his Energy Efficiency Office, yet somehow there is less response to our report. We have spent many hours and considered the submissions of many witnesses over a long period of time. Therefore, I suggest that it would be helpful to the House if the Secretary of State responded with more enthusiasm.

This is not an addition to the structure of the Bill, to which the Minister referred earlier, but a few words supportive of the objective which is that it is in the national interest to support the resources that we have in such a way that the demand for energy and the supply of it is harmonised with conservation, efficiency and the proper use of British Gas when it is privatised. That objective was one of the aims of the Standing Committee, because that matter was brought to its attention. It is one of the objectives of the Select Committee on Energy, conforming with the majority opinion in the country.

Mr. Rost: It gives me great pleasure to support the amendment so ably moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Lloyd), and spoken to by the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter).

The House may not be aware that this appears to be the first occasion, at least in my short lifetime in the House, when a Select Committee has gone to great lengths to have an input in legislation as it proceeds through the House, first, by producing a report, which appeared just as the legislation was going into Committee, and, secondly, by adopting the rather unusual procedure of tabling amendments across party lines on behalf of the Committee to support certain points which we as a Select Committee felt strongly should be in the legislation. We recommended in our report that they should be included.

My main concern, in supporting the amendments promoting energy efficiency, is the consumer, because in the end it is the consumer who suffers if he is not given the best advice, guidance and support. British Gas is in a unique position to help to promote greater energy efficiency, because it has direct access to the consumer through regular billing, meter reading and correspondence. It also has the management and staff infrastructure to provide that advice and service.

Secondly, the utility is in a unique position to promote energy efficiency because it has exceptional marketing skills. British Gas can promote energy efficiency far more aggressively and effectively, in the interests of its consumers, because of that marketing ability. Like other members of the Select Committee, I have had opportunities to study the utilities in other parts of the world, particularly North America, where the gas utilities are private enterprise utilities. Despite that, or perhaps because of that, they have a statutory obligation to demonstrate that least cost resource acquisition of gas is applied. They also have an obligation to promote energy efficiency in the interests of their customers, as well as to apply demand management. Where it is more cost-effective to invest in greater energy efficiency rather than to persuade customers to consume more wastefully, they have an obligation to invest on the demand management side rather than expand on the supply side.

We believed, in our Select Committee investigation, that there should be a similar obligation on British Gas and that it would not be unnecessarily cumbersome or involve bureaucratic red tape to build into the legislation a general directive, an obligation that British Gas should promote energy efficiency. Although we acknowledge, as I certainly do, that British Gas already does a great deal —no doubt my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will reply along those lines, saying that it makes great efforts—I believe that no harm would be done in writing that obligation into legislation to ensure that that effort is maintained and, indeed, increased.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Havant ably moved the amendment, he referred to evidence that we received in the Select Committee during our inquiry into the Energy Efficiency Office. We asked the Director-General of the Energy Efficiency Office whether more could be done to promote energy efficiency by the energy utilities—gas and electricity. He said that in his view it was inconceivable that energy efficiency would not be built in to the consideration of the regulatory authority for British Gas. However, it seems that it is conceivable, because the Government have not done that. The vague references in clause 4 are not an adequate substitute for a more formal commitment in legislation.

I believe that there should be a general obligation on British Gas to promote the efficient use of gas. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State should set British Gas annual guideline targets, and British Gas should report annually to the Director-General of Gas Supplies on its achievements in increasing energy efficiency with respect to tariffs and the contract market.

My right hon. Friend the Minister may suggest that it would be wrong and unfair to impose that obligation on British Gas because no such obligation has been imposed on the electricity industry. I would reply that, in that case, such an obligation should be imposed on the electricity industry as well. Two wrongs do not necessarily make a right. We have an opportunity to make at least a start, and I hope that we shall do so.

Mr. Lofthouse: As the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) has said, this is an unique occasion. I believe that it is the only time amendments to major legislation have been made through a Select Committee. I was delighted to hear the Select Committee's Chairman, the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Lloyd), the hon. Member for Erewash and my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter). I feel like a striker on a football field who has been running up and down a football field by himself for a few weeks waiting for the support players behind him to give him the ball to feed into the net. I regret the absence of many of the hon. Members who put their names to the amendments. I had hoped that they would be here to give support. I hope that they will vote later.

Much hard work within a short period went into producing the Select Committee's report with a view to assisting the deliberations of the Standing Committee. Unfortunately, the Government have not taken much notice of the Select Committee'a report. There may have been a hiccough here and a sneeze there but generally they have taken little notice of the recommendations. Ministers must show that they have taken some notice of them.

The weekend press told us—I do not know whether it was right or wrong—of the contempt of the Secretary of State for the Back Benchers on the Committees. The right hon. Gentleman does not want to hear that, because he is not listening. My colleagues on the Select Committee have probably, therefore, been wasting their time. The Bill was presented in indecent haste, without a White Paper. Hon. Members were given no time to digest it, and that arrogance is still with us.

I shall not go over the ground I covered in Standing Committee except to refer to the debate on Amendment No. 158, which I had the privilege of moving, which was similar to the amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Havant in Select Committee. There is hardly any difference at all. I draw the attention of the House to cols. 471-2, 741-3, 790-2 and 873-5 of the *Official Report* of Standing Committee F. I do not wish to take too long, so it is better if I leave it there.

10.30 pm

For very small amounts of money we could have further conservation. In fact, many local authorities throughout the country, particularly in London, carry out the improvement and insulation of properties at an average cost of £600 per job. As a result, the amount of electricity burnt has been decreased, from about 8,900 kW/hours to about 4,500—a saving of nearly 50 per cent. One can appreciate the financial savings that means to the lower paid and the unemployed. If the private sector had a statutory obligation to provide assistance for such insulation, the saving to the country in terms of gas supply and the saving for those who can ill afford to pay would be great.

No hon. Member, least of all the Secretary of State or his Ministers, can have any real confidence that under a newly privatised British Gas the motive will be anything other than pure and simple profit. I doubt whether the consumer will be foremost in the minds of those who hope to buy parts of British Gas. It will simply be profit. I even doubt whether the motivation that now exists within the BGC will continue. These private companies should have a statutory obligation to provide finance to enable gas to be saved and prices to be cut.

I hope that the Government will listen to the Select Committee. At present there are many wasted hours. By that I mean that on many occasions people are kept on their toes because they know that they may have to face the Select Committee, but I can recall few occasions on which the recommendations of a Select Committee have been taken on board by the Government.

Mr. Leadbitter: My hon. Friend referred to columns 471-2 and others of the *Official Report* of the Standing Committee, and also said that a similar amendment was considered by the Committee. Am I correct in thinking that some Conservative Members, who have appended their names to this amendment, did not vote for that similar amendment in Committee?

Mr. Lofthouse: It is worse that that, because they failed to vote for the amendment when I, as their shop steward, appealed to them to do so.

Mr. Bruce: I support the amendment tabled by the Select Committee. It is weaker than I would have wished, but I presume that that is to maximise the breadth of support for it, and to enable the Government to accept it, as I hope that they will.

I should point out that the phrase "all-party Select Committee" is used rather freely as only two of the nine parties in the House are represented on it. However, I do not wish to detract from the good job that it did on the report, which we had before us at the start of the Standing Committee and on which most hon. Members who were trying to work effectively drew heavily. Regrettably, Ministers did not, and although they paid tribute to the Select Committee's work, so far they have accepted few of its recommendations. I hope that in this last gasp they will put the record straight on that.

The hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) who was not a member of the Standing Committee, used the expression "least cost resource". Those who were members of it will

[Mr. Bruce]

recall that I proposed an amendment to persuade the Government that least cost resource should apply when determining the acquisition of new supplies. Regrettably, they were unwilling to take that point on board. I, too, quoted from the useful documents produced by the Association for the Conservation of Energy called "Lessons from America", especially from number five. I commend the document to hon. Members who are interested in the matter because it draws heavily on the American example, and seeks to highlight some of the points against which the Government have argued.

Mr. Rost: I would hate the House or my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to get the impression that my remarks were based on second-hand material from the Association for the Conservation of Energy, however much I respect its research. In recent years, some hon. Members have had the opportunity of visiting utilities in America, and of seeing them at first hand. That was the basis of my argument.

Mr. Bruce: I thought that the hon. Gentleman had made that plain. I hope to do the same this summer. My only regret is that I must do so after, rather than before, the Standing Committee. I accept his point, but take it that he is not contradicting the evidence, and that he has come to the same conclusion as the Association for the Conservation of Energy.

Conservation is rightly described by the ACE as the fifth fuel, and it should be treated in that vein. In other words when one considers the ways of supplying energy in future, we should not simply look at how to acquire new supplies, but should compare the cost of acquiring new supplies with the cost of investing in conservation, which is the point about least cost resource. If it is demonstrated that the investment in conservation would release more for less investment, that is the right avenue to follow and is better than investing in new sources of supply in advance of need. In the long run we shall always need those supplies, but we do not need always to address ourselves to acquiring those supplies.

The North of Scotland hydro-electric board, for example, is laying a cable across Skye to the Western Isles to provide electricity there. It would make sense to see whether that is the best investment, or whether it is better both for consumers and the board to invest in energy efficiency measures to ensure that the people there get the same level of comfort at a similar cost, simply by using the energy from existing supplies more efficiently.

That is a simple example of the sort of thing that should be considered. There is a whole range of such examples, on which any hon. Member could draw. I urge the Government to recognise that a modest amendment, such as this, which simply exorts British Gas to put energy efficiency as a specific requirement on its list of priorities, is the least that they could accept. Given the all-party basis on which the amendment has been endorsed, I hope that the Minister will accept it.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): As a member of the Select Committee on Energy, may I add my comments to those of the Committee's Chairman and other members. I join in requesting the Secretary of State to accept the amendments in the spirit in which they were tabled—that it would be in the best interests of all consumers, industrial and domestic, to encourage efficiency in the use of gas supplies. Everyone knows the Labour party's opposition to the Bill, but if we must have privatisation, we believe that the Bill must contain provisions for efficiency, to ensure that the gas supplied is used to the best advantage. Gas is used in glass making and other large industries, so it is important that it is used as efficiently as possible.

We must ensure that advice is given to domestic consumers on the best use of gas. The amendments also suggest that where efficiency requires investment, loans should be made available to consumers. That would be in the interests of British Gas, the consumers and the country. Against that background, I hope that the Secretary of State will accept the amendments.

One hon. Member called the amendments modest. Perhaps they are modest, inasmuch as they have been tempered to ensure that they do not breach the spirit of the Bill. I plead with the Secretary of State to accept the amendments and include those provisions in the Bill, because they will benefit the efficient use of the gas supplied to consumers.

Mr. Rowlands: The Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen support wholeheartedly the amendments that were moved by the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Lloyd). I do not reveal any secrets when I say that during 156 hours of debate in Committee one approaches amendments with varying degrees of commitment and belief. However, as we considered this issue, I became more convinced of the special role that the public utilities could play in energy efficiency and conservation.

Take the example of British Gas plc. It will purchase every cubic foot of gas that comes from the North sea. British Gas plc will control the entire national gas system which delivers that gas to the homes of more than 16 million customers. It will control between 60 per cent. and 70 per cent. of the sales of gas appliances. Therefore, British Gas plc will be part of the commanding heights of the nation's energy resources and their use. Given that incredible position—this is not a normal company, as the hon. Gentleman said—and the huge and specific responsibilities, as well as privileges, that will be placed upon British Gas, it is reasonable for us to expect British Gas to accept the duties that the amendments seek to place upon it.

It is complacent now, as it was in Committee, to make the observation that BGC already does much in a voluntary capacity. By adopting, a little more than it does now, the arguments about conservation, efficiency and a balance between conservation and energy efficiency versus investment in new development, it could have a tremendous impact on depletion policy in the North sea and on the cost of gas to the customer.

10.45 pm

This is not a fanciful argument to make, as members of the Select Committee and others who speak from experience have shown. Reports by the Association for the Conservation of Energy have shown that in America, from Texas to California, major public utilities in that essentially private enterprise economy, under regulation from the Public Utilities Commission, have been the leaders in promoting energy efficiency to individual householders, industry and commerce. The amendment does not cut across private enterprise, commercial practice

and capitalism. In the most private enterprise society, a combination of regulation and duties is placed upon the public utilities to develop energy conservation.

The argument applies to all parties, as the support given to it by all members of the Select Committee on Energy shows. Therefore, the Minister will have to produce much better justification than he did in Committee. Among other things, he has to justify why, of the 14 conditions enforced on the 25-year private monopoly licence that the Government want to give British Gas plc, not one deals with energy conservation and efficiency. That shows the contempt and lack of interest that Ministers have shown towards conservation and the role that public utilities should play in it.

I see the Secretary of State shake his head. I point out to the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Lloyd), the Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy, that his Committee has been treated with the contempt that the Secretary of State showed to the Standing Committee. He spoke for about four or five minutes in 156 hours, and spent the rest of his time in perpetual motion talking as he is again this evening.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Peter Walker): Shame.

Mr. Rowlands: It is a shame. The right hon. Gentleman has shown unbelievable behaviour. He was not even listening when my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) made a number of basic points. It is time to tell the Secretary of State that his behaviour has not been up to the standard that one expects of a Secretary of State. The issues raised by the hon. Member for Havant, and all members of the Select Committee, show that the Government should heed such widespread requests and support the principle of these amendments.

Mr. David Hunt: It is sad that the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), having made a pretence of welcoming cross-party support for the amendments, should then make a disgraceful attack on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who has taken every possible trouble to produce careful legislation to ensure that when privatisation takes place it is a major success story both for the Government and for the nation. It is inappropriate for the hon. Gentleman to make such comments. Throughout most of the Report debates today the hon. Gentleman has had behind him no more hon. Members than he had behind him in Committee. One would have thought that on such a major and important Bill the Labour party would have produced more than 10 Back Benchers for most of today's proceedings.

The hon. Gentleman should not have started this argument. He has lowered the standard of this debate by making such a disgraceful attack upon my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. I ask him to turn away from partisan arguments and return to the position from which he started.

The hon. Gentleman began reasonably well, by paying tribute to the all-party support for energy efficiency. These amendments deal with matters which the Government believe to be of great importance. My right hon. Friend has designated 1986 as Energy Efficiency Year. He and my right hon. and hon. Friends are making unprecedented efforts to spread the word about energy efficiency and about the benefits that can be reaped by all sectors of the community.

At breakfast specials, more than 16,000 top executives have listened to the energy efficiency message. This morning I addressed 400 top executives in Nottingham. That followed my right hon. Friend's addresses to more than 2,000 top executives in Solihull and London in the new round of Monergy breakfast specials.

My hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Lloyd) paid tribute to the work of his Select Committee. I join him in congratulating the members of his Select Committee, and I congratulate him on his leadership of the Committee and on the extent and depth of the investigations that were conducted by the Select Committee. It has been of enormous help to many hon. Members on both sides of the House to have the Select Committee's report on the regulation of the gas industry, and its report on energy efficiency policy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Havant referred to the £7 billion of energy that is being wasted. It is a national scandal. As a conservative estimate, that is 20 per cent. of our total energy bill of £35 billion. His Committee was right to highlight the appalling waste of £2 billion by the domestic sector and to report that it is the most deserving of immediate attention. However, I hope my hon. Friend realises that this Government have done more than any other Government have done since the war to promote the cause of energy efficiency.

I ask my hon. Friend to recognise that the Government's commitment in the Bill to energy efficiency has been followed through by placing upon the Secretary of State and the director general a duty to exercise their functions in a manner that is best calculated to promote the efficient use of gas by consumers who are supplied with gas through pipes. This duty will stand alongside the others in clause 4. It will give to the director general and the Secretary of State general guidelines about the way in which they should exercise their functions.

The director general will have to bear this duty in mind when exercising all his functions. However, we imagine that he will want to lay emphasis on this duty in relation to his other functions under the Bill, under which he is obliged to give assistance and advice to consumers. He will also wish to give his support to the tremendous activities that are undertaken by British Gas to ensure that its customers use gas efficiently, both in their own interests and in the interests of the British Gas in order to secure the long-term future of its markets?

I do not think that the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) did justice to his hon. Friends on both the Select Committee and the Standing Committee. He made some deprecatory comments about their contribution to the work of the Standing Committee. He said that he often felt that he was standing by himself. However, my hon. Friends the Members for Rochford (Dr. Clark) and for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) made a considerable contribution to the work of the Standing Committee. My hon. Friend the Member for Southgate moved a very important amendment relating to competition. He ensured that the Government were made aware of the important and decisive views of the Select Committee on that subject. It was the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford who said that the BGC had nothing much to brag about on energy efficiency. That rather runs contrary to the belief of other members of the Select Committee that British Gas did make a great

[Mr. David Hunt]

contribution. My hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) made a point about that just a few moments ago.

British Gas told the Select Committee in clear terms exactly what its contribution was to energy efficiency and it gave examples of how it was helping domestic consumers to use their energy efficiently. It promotes energy efficiency through a number of services and schemes—the BGC school of fuel management; the BGC technical consultancy services; the gas energy management awards for industry and commerce; the designs for energy management; the energy management competition; support for energy managers generally; support for the Energy Efficiency Office showroom advice experiment and the building centre energy advice centre. It has also done much to promote energy education in schools, and it explained to the Select Committee that its proper role was to develop and promote energy efficient practice and to educate customers about it.

Mr. Lofthouse: The hon. Gentleman has been telling the House of the Government's record on energy efficiency and conservation. Does he agree that the Government have cut the money available for insulation? Indeed, in real terms the money available now is only 58 per cent. of that available in 1979-80.

Mr. Hunt: That is not correct. If the hon. Gentleman looks carefully at the figures he will see that there is a history of underspend on that scheme. He will also recognise that we have debated that many times in the House, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has not just allocated what he believes is sufficient money to meet the need this year, but has said that when it comes to additional bids he will bear in mind that we are in Energy Efficiency Year.

Mr. Leadbitter: The hon. Gentleman referred to clause 4 in an attempt to persuade the House of Commons that that supports energy efficiency. I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman has not read the amendment. Clause 4 addresses itself specifically to those authorised to supply gas. The amendments are concerned with the consumers of gas. That is an important point for him to bear in mind. Why are we chewing over four lines tonight when they could be put into the Bill and forgotten about?

Mr. Hunt: I know that the hon. Gentleman feels strongly about the issue, but it is not as simple as he has sought to suggest. The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney said that he could not find it in the authorisation. It is in the primary legislation.

Clause 4 is an important clause. It imposes the clear duty

"to promote efficiency and economy . . . and the efficient use of gas supplied through pipes".

We are talking about duties on the public gas supplier. In seeking to challenge me on that the hon. Gentleman is talking about the customer or consumer, and that is the relevance of the amendment. But he should recognise the clear obligation that is on the director general, and if he looks elsewhere in the Bill he will see that the director general has obligations, as I have already said, to the consumers, and that is an easy way to explain what I believe is an effective duty already there.

In that context let me examine the wording of the amendment. I appreciate the way in which the hon. Gentleman paid tribute to my right hon. Friend and his tremendous enthusiasm to promote the cause of energy efficiency, which receives considerable all-party support. I recognise that my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash has also paid tribute to my right hon. Friend on many occasions. I equally recognise that my hon. Friend has carried out considerable research into this question.

11 pm

I must tell the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) that the Select Committee recognised that initiatives taken by energy utilities in the United States to reduce energy consumption were not necessarily appropriate in the United Kingdom. Had the hon. Gentleman explored further he would have reached that conclusion. He now has to make his decision before he sees at first hand the relevance of that.

The Association for the Conservation of Energy has a good record in urging Governments to take up the cause of fuel efficiency. I pay tribute to that association, but in this context—I shall explain why—the amendment will not assist.

I have examined the BGC's record. The amendment seeks to single out British Gas for this obligation. I do not know whether my hon. Friends and Opposition Members want to place a similar obligation on the National Coal Board, the electricity industry or the oil companies. If they do not, why? If they do, they must recognise that even if I do not accept their arguments they have an unfair approach to the problem. It would be far better to deal with the problem under primary legislation and by imposing that duty on all utilities and energy corporations. I do not accept that such a duty should be placed on them, but surely it is more logical to impose a duty generally than to single out British Gas, which has a tremendous record.

As the Minister responsible for energy efficiency, I have had tremendous support from British Gas in the energy efficiency campaign. I hope the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) recognises that one has to be careful about putting duties in legislation, if by doing that one complicates the situation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Havant made it clear that he would not support the amendment if he thought it would do other than present firm and strong words in the right direction. He has said that forcefully. The amendment would impose a bureaucratic nightmare on the industry, which deserves clear, simple wording in legislation. By singling out British Gas, and by imposing this obligation on British Gas, the amendment would create a legislative minefield. It would be an invitation to all potential litigators to single out a corporation which had done a tremendous amount for energy efficiency to complicate matters and to stop the legitimate move towards energy efficiency which is gathering pace.

The British Gas Corporation is extremely enthusiastic about energy efficiency. Why do my hon. Friends think of supporting an amendment which would make ours a land more fit for lawyers than for people who believe in energy efficiency? I ask my hon. Friends to recognise that my right hon. Friend's massive monetary campaign, already successful, represents a better path to achieve our common objective—energy efficiency.

When hon. Members come to consider the need to promote energy efficiency, they will recognise that it is not

easily accomplished by an amendment which is so complicated. If they wish to press ahead with the objective which we all share, I hope that it will not be by creating an unnecessarily bureaucratic system of control, as proposed in the amendment.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 184, Noes 220.

Division No.107] **[11.05 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rost, Peter
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Don Dixon.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Latham, Michael
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert

McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Gerald Malone and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

11.15 pm

Mr. Ian Lloyd: I beg to move Amendment No. 3, in page 6, line 12, at end insert

'*(e)* conditions requiring the public gas supplier to publish, annually, audited accounts showing separately the profits arising from sales of gas subject to maximum price regulation, which accounts shall be certified by the Director as showing the real costs and revenues ascribable to those activities of the supplier.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 4, in page 6, line 28, at end insert—

'*(c)* to comply with any direction given by the Director as to the manner in which the accounts of the public gas supplier are to be prepared and published; and as to the formulation of indicators of standards of service to be published with such accounts.'.

Mr. Lloyd: Before I come to the two amendments I should like to say how much I appreciate the tribute by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary to me and my Committee. I would do very little without my Committee. There is an inescapable tension between any Select Committee and Government at any time if both are doing their jobs properly. In my judgment that tension is part of the value of the system, and if it were to disappear we would lose something. Governments must govern and they must get it right, one hopes, 95 per cent. of the time. Select Committees must give second opinions and, if they are doing their work properly, perhaps one time in 20 they will be right. Perhaps, if it is a very good Committee, that ratio may well improve.

I should like to refer to a phrase used by the right hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), who, I am sorry to see, is not in his place. He said that the Select Committee was treated with contempt. I must say that I have never, at any time, experienced any contempt from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or any of his hon. Friends and other Ministers from the Department of Energy. Indeed, if ever I thought my Committee was treated with contempt the speech I would make in this House would be very different from the one that I made earlier and that I propose to make now. Indeed, the compulsion and immediacy of Government, as experienced by any Government from time to time, could give rise to what Shelley referred to in "Ozymandias", king of kings, as the "sneer of cold command". Those at the other end of Government policy sometimes misinterpret what is an unavoidable and necessary act of policy as the "sneer of cold command".

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and all his predecessors have always gone to considerable lengths to ensure that the Committee, at least occasionally, feels that its points and arguments contribute to the formation of energy policy in this country. Naturally, we hope, as all Select Committees hope, that that ratio will be improved and that we shall make a more valuable input into the formation of policy; but contempt, no.

Mr. Orme: I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman, as the distinguished Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy, is saying. As Chairman, he is lucky in view of the way in which the Secretary of State for Energy dealt with the Select Committee on Environment over the weekend. That is a different matter. He talked about Back-Bench Members who happened to be members of the Committee not knowing what they were talking about. I notice that the response to the hon. Gentleman's Committee was not the same. However, we have a right to refer to the Secretary of State's response to the Select Committee on Environment, which is not directly related to his Department, but was dealing with Sellafield. The response in that case was entirely different.

Mr. Lloyd: I note the right hon. Gentleman's comment. It is not for me to comment on other Select Committees or their fate over the weekend. That Committee has also entered into an area of great controversy, and inevitably, in some measure, the same problems arise. I think that it is true to say that while our system provides that the Executive is drawn from the

House, I do not see that there will ever be a completely satisfactory solution to the problem. We must try to get the best out of both systems, recognising that there is an inherent and unavoidable conflict simply because of our constitutional practice and procedure.

No preamble to the amendments is necessary. We move here into the arcane area of mystery known as accounting. The question that the amendments imply is: how accurate, relevant and informative can the accounts of the new company be? How completely can they be made to disclose what is happening without in any way damaging the operating efficiency of the concern? I regard that as the common objective of the House.

Our arguments are set out in our report under the heading "The 'X' factor", in paragraphs 30 to 35. I shall not bore the House by reading them all, as I am sure that every hon. Member who is here will have had the chance to look at them. We recommend

"that Condition 2 of the draft Authorisation be amended to require that British Gas should publish, annually, the profits that arise from sales in the regulated tariff market".

That proposal lies at the heart of our amendment. In the Government's reply, the arguments against that are, essentially, first, that the director general already has the information, and, secondly, that he has the discretion to publish it. However, the key objection that the Government have put forward to our proposal is in paragraph 54 of their reply, where they conclude:

"Any requirement to publish detailed profit figures must be compatible with the nature of the business."

I think that everyone will accept that.

"The nature of the integrated gas supply business means that it is not possible to associate in a rigorous way specific costs to individual sectors of the market."

I am in slightly less than total agreement with that conclusion. The Government continue:

"The objective accuracy of separate profit figures for tariff and contract sectors is not sufficient for regulation to require audited published accounts."

In that context, it seems to me that whatever difficulty one may experience in allocating costs, there is seldom any real difficulty in allocating revenues. Even if one has a partial allocation—less than satisfactory, but certainly better than a global aggregation or agglomeration of figures—that will reveal some information that will be valuable.

In our judgment, it is essential that the public should have great confidence in the integrity of the accounts of the new corporation. The amendment is significant, but not unduly ambitious. It merely calls for an honest effort by all parties to produce fair, reasonable and informative figures. I do not think that anyone can object to that. The objective, especially of amendment No. 4, is that, in the accounts of British Gas, there should not only be no possibility of concealing what might be described as energy accounting skulduggery — we are all familiar with what that can mean—but it should be seen by the public at large, and indeed by the experts who study those figures with great assiduity, and burn the midnight oil in so doing, that no such concealment has been attempted, taken place or indeed, in a near ideal world, was ever likely.

Mr. Leadbitter: I hope that, before the guillotine falls and we all leave this place, harmed and hurt, the Minister will resolve not to create an international crisis, as his colleague the Under-Secretary of State tried to do with the last group of amendments. I thought, on listening to the hon. Gentleman, that the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries was going to call an emergency meeting and that the lawyers were sharpening their knives for another feast. Frightening questions of litigation were raised and the great shadow of a new bureaucracy loomed — all over four lines of a simple common-sense amendment.

At this time of night, hon. Members sitting here, or, in my case, standing — I do not know for how long because I am beginning to enjoy myself — want the Minister of State to make a response that differs from the theatricals of the Under-Secretary of State. Interesting though the hon. Gentleman's speech was, it was irrelevant. The Labour amendments provided for nothing less than what the hon. Gentleman said would be expected of good private enterprise. However, in this and in the previous group of amendments, we are not dealing with privatisation. There is no such thing as "privatisation" here. That is a cannibalisation and a prostitution of the word. We have here a private monopoly.

As a state monopoly, British Gas is accountable to Parliament. It prepares accounts. All those people interested in its affairs who send letters to the board receive not only letters of courtesy and explanation but an expensively drawn-up annual report. We have learnt a great deal from that close working relationship, which has been valued in the House.

We are creating a new animal. For a moment, there will be a honeymoon. The chairman will be there, unlike Lord King, who does not care who owns the shop so long as he manages it. The present chairman of British Gas has fought hard for the company, because he believes in it. The Government wanted to fragment British Gas. They wanted to get rid of the shop window dressing which told all the consumers how wonderful British Gas was. The chairman won his battle, but the outright obduracy of the Government prevailed. They said, "We cannot get our way on fragmentation, so we shall get rid of the lot." Once "the lot" is gone and parliamentary accountability is diminished, no hon. Member, no Secretary of State and no Prime Minister can give an undertaking that the new private monopoly will do what the Government want. The new company will be accountable to its shareholders. The priorities in energy use may be put at risk if there are any economic strictures in a particular year.

I recall how, under another Administration, a valuable piece of investment which was of paramount importance to the United Kingdom in the world of transport was brought to an end in one weekend because of the plea that economies had to be made.

These amendments call for accountability. We want accounts to be made available and annual reports to be made public. We want to know what the profits are and how they have come about. We want to know how much profit is associated with the maximum prices that are prevailing at the time. Such accountability helps the House of Commons to analyse, scrutinise and monitor in such a way that the Mother of Parliaments can say, "Halt, private monopoly gas! Your are going too far. Some of the priorities that we feel essential are being diminished—in this instance, these priorities concern the users of gas."

It is important that the Minister considers these amendments with great care. He should remember that on balance it is sometimes much better to accept the good sense of the House of Commons than the advice that he receives from the Ministry.

11.30 pm

I have paid tribute to the Secretary of State. As the Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy knows, I am an ardent Labour supporter and am the longest-serving member of that Select Committee. For many years before that I was a member of the Select Committee on Science and Technology. I have been adamant in supporting the objectives and purposes of the Select Committee, and have always been generous in conveying my appreciation to Ministers, particularly to the present Secretary of State.

Having said that, I remind the House that the reputation of the Department of Energy as having a monopoly of initiative has not been too high. Anyone reading the Select Committee's report on conservation will understand our battle to persuade the Department of Energy to get out of its sleepy posture. We are proud that at last we have had some influence.

It is often better for Ministers to take account of what the House of Commons is saying. This is the best university in the world. There is a great deal of experience and learning in this House. It does not follow that because a man becomes a Minister, he is overnight given a wisdom that he never had before. When Ministers listen to their advisers, they should remember that there is nothing to suggest that they are any better or worse than the advisers who attend the Select Committee. We are privileged to have a great deal of knowledge. It is therefore important that the Government should reciprocate more generously in their response to the work of the Select Committee.

As has been pointed out, this is the first Select Committee to have tabled amendments to the outcome of a Standing Committee's deliberations. There may well have been good reason to have done so previously, but we are now at the moment when the Government should understand why we have tabled these amendments. The hesitancy of Select Committees over the years to table amendments in the House is an indication of the care that we take not to abuse the House or stretch its tolerance too far. Therefore, the Minister should bear in mind that after all the years of agony of persuasion, the Select Committee has established with the Department a relationship that calls for a more generous response. The amendments are important because they will enable the House to see what the new private monopoly does. In the short term, we are not so worried, but with a change of board and chairman, and with the monopoly taking hold and becoming more predominant than the interests of the House, we must take great care to establish in the Bill the statutory requirements so that the responsibilities will emerge in the interests of gas consumers.

Amendment No. 4 suggests that this form of accountability should take into account the formulation of indicators and standards of service to be published with the accounts. Those indicators are important because the standards are different from the efficiency of the service. There can be efficiency without the highest standards. Again, we want to establish the harmonisation of efficiency and standards in such a way as to maintain the high reputation that British Gas has established over the past few years.

The amendments are contained in a matter of three or four lines. That is not a great deal to include in the Bill. It will not add to the structure or create a great bureaucracy. Lawyers will not be affected. After all, they get a good share of what goes on in the House. They are overloaded with case work and litigation. Anyone who knows much about lawyers knows that they know full well how to look after themselves, without the Minister doing so. It is harder to get the truth or information out of the mouth of a lawyer without a fee than it is to open an oyster without a knife. Ministers do not need to make pleas on behalf of lawyers or to produce a frightening theatrical exercise about litigation. We are asking for accountability, and that is enough for this time of the night.

Mr. Rost: In supporting the amendments I shall not attempt to emulate the eloquence of my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Lloyd) or the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter). I remind my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that on Second Reading many hon. Members on both sides of the House raised anxieties about whether the legislation would impose on British Gas the obligation to publish adequate financial information, and some of us continue to have doubts. In Committee we have not written in sufficient safeguards to ensure proper accountability.

It is unsatisfactory that British Gas should not be obligated to disaggregate its costs and profits between different functions and activities. That is important to ensure there is no question of unfair cross-subsidisation concealed by not providing adequate information.

British Gas should be obliged to publish adequate financial information on the separate components of its business. That is not an unreasonable obligation to write into the legislation. Indeed, it occurs in all good corporate practice in the private sector. Many major companies voluntarily publish a detailed breakdown of their turnover and profit centres, as opposed to one side of their business and the other. They do so to inform their shareholders. If that applies to private sector enterprise, it must apply even more rigorously to an effective monopoly. It should have an even greater obligation to specify that the director general can obtain all the information that he might require to exercise his duties. In demanding that in the amendments, we are not asking for any more than is enshrined in the legislation on British Telecom, where the Director-General of Oftel can order any information which he requires to exercise his duties.

The director general should have the power to specify what information is included in the accounts over and above the minimum legal requirements of the Companies Act, and to request that that should be included in the legislation is not unreasonable. Hon. Members on both sides of the House, especially Conservative Members, should be sympathetic towards that aim. I hope that my right hon. Friend will reconsider whether there are adequate safeguards and will table amendments in another place to ensure complete safeguards.

I am not satisfied that the legislation as drafted will provide for the publication of minimum contract prices. That is important to put beyond doubt that there shall be no predatory pricing. Unless we insist that minimum as well as maximum contract prices are published, the legislation will remain weak. I hope that my right hon. Friend will take that point on board.

Mr. Hardy: I join the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) in his plea to the Minister. The hon. Gentleman is entitled to make the request, because his conduct during the past hour had been a demonstration of consistency and logic. He was the only Conservative Member to join us in voting for the Select Committee's amendment, and he was

entirely justified in doing so. This amendment has almost become a consideration of the position of the Select Committee, from which it originated. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) reminded us, this is the first occasion on which a Select Committee has tabled amendments to a Government Bill. Therefore, it is regrettable that the amendments should have been so badly supported by the majority of the members of the Select Committee, some of whom have not even bothered to attend the debate.

The hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Lloyd) said that the public should be aware that there is no concealment. Every hon. Member should support that view. There is already enough concealment built into the Bill. No hon. Member has reminded the House that there will be substantial concealment of shareholdings. In Committee, we pressed for proper protection for the public and for those who hold shares on the privatised company, and we argued that there should be no anonymous holdings. The Minister assured us of the protection of the Companies Act, under which anyone who holds more than 5 per cent. of the equity would have to be known by British Gas. Five percent. of a tiny business may not be significant, but in the largest gas undertaking in the world, a 5 per cent. holding will allow people to hold about £400 million worth of equity without being identified to British Gas plc.

We have had passing reference today, and detailed consideration in Committee, of foreign ownership. As the hon. Member for Havant said, there is cause for concern about concealment. The possibility of massive secret holdings, and of foreign holdings, of which individual holdings could amount to £1,200 million or more, depending on the size of the flotation, suggest that the Government need to be particularly careful to ensure that the call of the hon. Member for Havant on behalf of the Select Committee receives a proper response. There would be cause for great concern on the Committee if its report receives the same treatment as the last one.

It would be sad, if on this significant, perhaps even historic occasion, the Select Committee, which already has grounds for ample complaint about the way that it has been treated by Her Majesty's Government, found this amendment dismissed as well. It would give even the most docile Conservative Member cause for concern that the Government seem prepared to see yet more concealment built into the privatised structure.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool was justified to call on the Minister to resolve the difficulties caused by the Government's rejection of the previous amendment. I trust that the excessive docility shown by the colleagues of the hon. Member for Erewash will not encourage the Government to act with the insolent approach that has dominated their proceedings today. They seem to have mistaken verbosity for elegance and co-operativeness.

The Secretary of State has done a great deal of damage, although the Under-Secretary was quick to spring to his defence when a mild rebuke was offered earlier. The Secretary of State has had a field day in the past 48 hours, attacking one Select Committee with viturperative arrogance, and now dismissing the Select Committee on Energy because the Conservative majority, apart from the hon. Member for Erewash, is guilty of the most appalling docility. The Government have done a great deal of damage to Select Committees. It was not wise for this Committee to have adopted the stance of the Grand Old Duke of York. It may not have assisted the historic development of Select Committees in their present form, which is most important. I trust that the hon. Members for Havant, for Rochford (Dr. Clark), for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) — who has not graced us with his presence——

Mr. Bruce: He has enough troubles.

Mr. Hardy: He may have, and it may have been better for him if he had been present in the debate, as he is a member of the Select Committee.

The hon. Members for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) and for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), all of whom had their names to these amendments, should be here, and should have considered voting for the amendments more seriously than they appear to have done. They will no doubt receive another tribute from the Minister.

Paragraph 71 of the Select Committee report refers to the British Gas view that it should be free to operate within the private sector. The Select Committee found two reasons for the rejection of that view. The first was that British Gas would not be operating and competing within the private sector, but within the public sector too, thus being involved in the economically schizophrenic position normally reserved for politicians on the Right.

The second reason that the Select Committee identified was that British Gas would be operating in what is effectively a monopoly position. I am glad that the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Lloyd) has returned to the Chamber. I made a critical reference to his absence a few minutes ago from the Division Lobby. The hon. Member for Havant and his colleagues were right to identify those two reasons, but there is a third. In addition to the two valid arguments that were perceived by the Select Committee there is also the factor of scale. British Gas will be enormous when it is privatised. It will be enormous not only in British terms but in international terms. Its market operations could have a distorting effect. That is another reason for the Select Committee's attitude, which I hope it will sustain if the Government are not prepared to adopt a responsible attitude towards these amendments.

Earlier this evening my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) was criticised for referring to British Gas as a monster monopoly. That was a perfectly accurate description of it. I accept that the hon. Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) assumed that my hon. Friend was using the word "monstrous" as a noun rather than as an adjective. But it is enormous. So long as it remains under its present management it could be described almost as an elephant. An elephant is herbivorous. Problems begin if the elephant becomes a carnivore. If the elephant, because of its size, becomes a marauding carnivore, it could wreak enormous damage upon the environment. For that reason, if I may be excused the zoological metaphor, it would be entirely appropriate if the safeguards that are embodied in the very modest amendments for which the Select Committee asks could be achieved. I recognise that Sir Denis Rooke might not welcome being described as a herbivore, but he has conducted himself in a responsible manner and we shall not be so anxious while Sir Denis Rooke or the existing members of the higher levels of management are in charge, but there is no guarantee——

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman is expressing a degree of disrespect to Sir Denis Rooke. I am not sure that he would be very pleased about being described as a herbivore or as a pachyderm. However, should this ferocious, marauding, carnivorous elephant come into existence, does the hon. Gentleman think that if the elephant grew too big the danger is that it might stand on a lot of people rather than goring them with its tusks, or eating them, or doing whatever other strange affectation might come to the hon. Gentleman's mind?

Mr. Hardy: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall not pursue the matter because the Minister of State may wish to reply to the debate. Ministers have complained about our descriptions of them since the second week in December. I shall not add insult to injury on this occasion. However, I do not apologise for leaving the Minister of State with only a short time in which to reply because the contributions of Ministers on the previous two amendments were of inordinate length. It serves them right if they are caught out by their guillotine.

I trust that on this occasion the Select Committee will not be treated with the arrogance—*[Interruption.]* It is no use the Minister of State complaining. First he wanted me to sit down so that he could reply. Now he seeks to interject from a sedentary position. The fact remains that sooner or later people may be in charge of the new, privatised organisation who will have the marauding or carnivorous disposition to which I have already referred. It is in order to supply society with the kind of protection that the Select Committee perceived as being necessary that we support these amendments and trust that the Minister of State will accept them.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am glad that the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) has given me at least a few minutes in which to reply to this group of amendments.

I begin by acknowledging the contribution that the Select Committee has made to the discussions on the Bill, particularly in relation to accounting. My hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Lloyd) referred to this as an arcane area of accounting. He is not doing himself justice. I do not think that it is arcane. It is a very important area of accounting. I agree with what he is trying to achieve. To use his words, he wants the Government to produce real information figures. I accept that it is important that we have real information figures, otherwise one could get cross-subsidisation between one area of activity and another, and that could cause problems in relation to fairness and everything else.

We have looked carefully at the accounting requirement that should be imposed on British Gas in the authorisation. I know that the Select Committee was critical in paragraph 33 that condition two regarding separate accounts for the gas supply business did not entirely fulfil the purposes which it felt were necessary. But there is a clear requirement in condition two on British Gas to draw up accounts for the gas supply business, and it gives the director general the role of scrutinising the allocation of costs between the gas supply business and any other business that British Gas undertakes. The authorisation will ensure that proper accounts are drawn up which represent a true and fair view of the gas supply business.

The hon. Member for Wentworth referred to the response of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the Select Committee's report and questioned whether we were right in saying that the nature of the gas supply business means that it is not possible to associate in a "rigorous way" specific costs of individual sectors of the market. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and other Committee members will reflect on that further, because not only do tariff and non-tariff sales share the same pipes, but they share the same emergency, purchasing and general services.

Therefore, given the way in which the provisions of long-term gas purchasers' contracts have developed over the past 20 years, there is a particular difficulty in the apportionment and proper identification of the costs which relate on the one hand to maintaining peak supply needs and on the other those which relate to meeting the base load. Therefore, there is not necessarily the kind of simple connection, which the Select Committee is recommending in paragraph 33 and the amendment, between, for example, the load factor and the costs. Costs could be allocated in any one of a considerable variety of ways, and the choice that is made materially affects the accounts. To take the test which the Select Committee has used of the objective accuracy of separate profit figures is not a proper reflection of the realities of the gas supply business and for the authorisation to require audited published accounts.

We have achieved the same purposes in the authorisation because the director general will be able to exercise his judgment in that area. That area will not always be the same. I prefer the flexibility given to the director general to scrutinise the accounts and to achieve proper allocation to the slightly greater rigidity of writing that into the primary legislation, although I understand the purpose of that. From the start the director general will be able to use his powers to call for all the necessary information covering the tariff market. He will therefore have access to information about the possible bases on which costs and revenues can be related and to the price regulatory section of the market. Those powers are clearly in clause 7.

My hon. Friend the Member for Havant also raised the matter of transparency. Clause 34 gives the director general a discretion to publish information that he considers appropriate, and procedures are set out in the Bill which enable the authorisation to be modified. If the director general found that he was being inhibited in carrying out the purpose of the amendment, which I support, he would be able to introduce those modifications.

On that basis, the regulatory arrangements set out in the Bill and the draft authorisation must be looked at together. They deal with the important need to ensure that proper accounts are drawn up and published. I ask my hon. Friend the Member for Havant to withdraw his amendment, not because I disagree with its purpose, but because I believe that by what we have already done about authorisation we meet the purposes which he and the Select Committee wish. I hope that my hon. Friend will not press the amendment to a Division.

Mr. Ian Lloyd: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

It being Twelve o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order (17th February) and the Resolution this day, to put forthwith the Questions on amendments moved by a member of the Government.*

Clause 10

DUTY TO SUPPLY CERTAIN PREMISES

Amendment made: No. 8, in page 9, line 27, at end insert—

'(3A) The Secretary of State may, after consultation with the Director, make provision by regulations for entitling a public gas supplier to require a person requiring a supply of gas in pursuance of subsection (1) above to pay to the supplier an amount in respect of the expenses of the laying of the main used for the purpose of giving that supply if—

(a) the supply is required within the prescribed period after the laying of the main;

(b) a person for the purpose of supplying whom the main was laid has made a payment to the supplier in respect of those expenses;

(c) the amount required does not exceed any amount paid in respect of those expenses by such a person or by any person previously required to make a payment under the regulations; and

(d) the supplier has not recovered those expenses in full.'. —*[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Clause 14

FIXING OF TARIFFS

Amendment made: No. 10, in page 14, line 4, after 'or', insert 'other'.—*[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Clause 16

STANDARDS OF QUALITY

Amendment made: No. 11, in page 14, line 39, leave out 'he' and insert 'the Secretary of State'. — *[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Clause 19

ACQUISITION OF RIGHTS TO USE PIPE-LINES

Amendments made: No. 12, in page 21, line 8, at end insert—

'( ) for regulating the terms on which the supplier will supply gas to the applicant where the applicant's exercise of the right is temporarily interrupted by his inability to obtain gas from other sources;'.

No. 13, in page 21, line 40, at end insert—

'(6A) Where directions under this section require the public gas supplier to accept an obligation to supply gas to any person, the obligation shall be to supply gas to that person only in circumstances where to do so would not prejudice the performance by the supplier of such of his duties under sections 9(1) and 10(1) above, and of his contractual obligations, as fall to be performed otherwise than on the temporary interruption of the exercise of a right conferred in pursuance of those directions or of any other directions under this section.'. — *[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Clause 24

MODIFICATION REFERENCES TO MONOPOLIES COMMISSION

Amendment made: No. 16, in page 27, line 35, after 'supplier', insert 'and to the Council'. — *[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Clause 25

REPORTS ON MODIFICATION REFERENCES

Amendments made: No. 17, in page 29, line 25, leave out from beginning to 'in' in line 29 and insert—

'(5) Subject to subsection (6) below, the Director shall—

(a) on receiving such a report, send a copy of it to the public gas supplier and to the Secretary of State; and

(b) not less than 14 days after that copy is received by the Secretary of State, send another copy to the Council and publish that other copy'.

No. 18, in page 29, line 35, leave out from 'days' to end of line 38 and insert

'mentioned in subsection (5) above, direct the Director to exclude that matter from the copy of the report to be sent to the Council and published under that subsection.'. — *[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Clause 28

ORDERS FOR SECURING COMPLIANCE WITH CERTAIN PROVISIONS

Amendment made: No. 19, in page 33, line 4, after '4', insert 'and 13A'.—*[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Clause 41

GENERAL RESTRICTIONS ON DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Amendments made: No. 22, in page 41, line 42, at end insert—

'( ) for the purpose of facilitating the performance of any functions of the Health and Safety Executive under any enactment;'.

No. 23, in page 42, line 8, at end insert—

'( ) the Consumer Protection Act 1961;'.

No. 24, in line 13, at end insert—

'( ) the Consumer Safety Act 1978;'.

No. 25, in page 42, line 20, leave out 'this Part' and insert

'any provision of this Part other than section *(Power of Council to investigate other matters)* (3) above'. — *[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Clause 46

PROVISIONS AS TO REGULATIONS

Amendments made: No. 26, in page 45, line 11, leave out 'or incidental' and insert ', incidental or transitional'.

No. 27, in page 45, line 15, leave out 'or failing to comply with'.—*[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Clause 47

INTERPRETATION OF PART I

Amendment made: No. 28, in page 46, line 41, leave out 'References in this Part' and insert

'In this Part, except in section 18, references'. — *[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Clause 49

BRITISH GAS STOCK

Amendment made: No. 29, in page 48, line 15, at end insert—

'(3A) As from the transfer date British Gas 3% Guaranteed Stock, 1990-95 shall be renamed "3% Exchequer Gas Stock, 1990-95"'.—*Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Clause 60

EXCLUSION OF CERTAIN AGREEMENTS FROM RESTRICTIVE TRADE PRACTICES ACT 1976

Amendments made: No. 30, in page 55, line 25, leave out from '1976' to 'shall' in line 1 on page 56.

No. 31, in page 56, line 5, after 'agreement', insert 'containing provisions'.

No. 32 in page 56, line 8, at end insert—

'(2) The said Act of 1976 shall not apply, and shall be deemed never to have applied, to any agreement which—

(a) is or was made on or after 28th November 1985;

(b) is or was an agreement containing provisions relating to, or to activities connected with, the supply otherwise than under an authorisation granted under section 7 above of gas won under the authority of a petroleum production licence; and

(c) satisfies such other conditions as may be specified in an order made by the Secretary of State.

(2A) The conditions specified in an order under subsection (2) above may include—

(a) conditions which are to be satisfied in relation to a time before the coming into force of this section;

(b) conditions which refer any matter (which may be the general question whether the said Act of 1976 should apply to a particular agreement) to the Secretary of State for determination after such consultation as may be so specified.

(2B) Any modification on or after 28th November 1985 of any agreement made before that date shall—

(a) if it relates exclusively to the identities of the parties to the agreement, be treated for the purposes of this section and the said Act of 1976 as a modification before that date; and

(b) in any other case, be treated for those purposes in relation to the original agreement as a separate agreement.

and, accordingly, in neither case shall the modification be capable of having the effect of requiring an agreement made before that date to be treated for those purposes as an agreement made on or after that date.'

No. 33, in page 56, line 9, after 'section', insert 'the following in particular, that is to say, exploration for gas and'.

No. 34, page 56, line 32, at end insert—

'(4A) In relation to any supply before the appointed day, the reference in subsection (2) above to a supply of gas otherwise than under an authorisation granted under section 7 above shall have effect as a reference to a supply of gas otherwise than in performance of any duty imposed by the 1972 Act.'.—*[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Clause 64

GENERAL INTERPRETATION

Amendment made: No. 35, in page 58, line 8, after 'requirement', insert ', regulations'.—*[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Clause 65

AMENDMENTS, TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS, SAVINGS AND REPEALS

Amendment made: No. 36, in page 58, line 32 after 'of', insert—

'(a)'.

No. 37, in page 58, line 33 at end insert—

(b) any reference (in whatever terms) in that Act or subordinate legislation to a person carrying on a gas undertaking or to such an undertaking; or

(c) any reference in that Act or subordinate legislation to any enactment repealed by this Act.'. — *[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Clause 66

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Amendment made: No. 38, in page 59, line 28 at end insert—

'section *[Statement in connection with flotation]*;'. — *[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Schedule 2

GAS CONSUMERS' COUNCIL

Amendments made: No. 39, in page 61, line 19 leave out 'Treasury' and insert 'Secretary of State'.

No. 40, in page 61, line 23 at end insert—

'(3) The consent of the Treasury shall be required for the giving by the Secretary of State of an approval for the purposes of sub-paragraph (1) above.'.—*[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Schedule 5

PUBLIC GAS SUPPLY CODE

Amendments made: No. 41, in page 72, line 38 leave out 'in writing'.

No. 44, in page 73, line 39 leave out 'in writing'.

No. 45, in page 74, line 4 leave out 'in writing'.

No. 46, in page 74, line 16 leave out 'in writing'.

No. 47, in page 74, line 26 leave out 'in writing'.

No. 48, in page 75, line 33 leave out 'in writing'.

No. 51, in page 76, line 23 at end insert—

'Information as to escapes of gas

13A. It shall be the duty of a public gas supplier to take such steps as are necessary to ensure that, if he is informed of an escape of gas that he is not required by paragraph 13 above to prevent, he passes the information on, as soon as reasonably practicable—

(a) to the person who appears to the public gas supplier to be responsible (whether under that paragraph or otherwise) for preventing the escape; or

(b) in the case of an escape occurring in the authorised area of another public gas supplier, to that other public gas supplier.'.—*[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Schedule 7

MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendments made: No. 52, in page 82, line 35 leave out '213(3).'.

No. 53, in page 83, line 44 at end insert—

'*(g)* paragraph 3 of Schedule 5 to the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.'.—*[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Schedule 8

TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS AND SAVINGS

Amendment made: No. 54, in page 103, line 23 at end insert—

'(2A) If the said rights and liabilities vest by virtue of section 49 of this Act in the Treasury, any agreement made, transaction effected or other thing done in relation to any British Gas 3% Guaranteed Stock, 1990-95 which is in force or effective immediately before the transfer date shall have effect as if made, effected or done in relation to that Stock as renamed under subsection (3A) of that section and, accordingly, references to that Stock in any agreement (whether or not in writing) or in any deed, bond, instrument or other document whatsoever to that Stock shall be taken as referring to that Stock as to renamed.'. —*[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Bill to be read the Third time this day.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): In order to save the time of the House I shall put together the Questions on motions 3, 4 and 5 on the Order Paper.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79 (5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

NORTHERN IRELAND

That the draft Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 28th January, be approved.

NORTHERN IRELAND

That the draft Mental Health (Northern Ireland Consequential Amendments) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 28th January, be approved.

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE

That the draft Parliamentary Constituencies (England) (Miscellaneous Changes) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 20th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Question agreed to.

European Community (Intervention Buying)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

12.1 am

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceridigion and Pembroke, North): I shall not delay the House much longer at this early hour. We have had a busy day debating important issues. I am glad to have the opportunity to discuss the intervention buying system that operates within the Community. I shall be brief, but I shall ask some probing questions of the Minister to which I hope he will give a favourable reply.

My firm belief is that the intervention buying system for agricultural products is responsible for much of the bad publicity that surrounds the EEC and gives unnecessary ammunition to those who oppose our membership. In the past few years many hon. Members who are opposed to our being a full member of the European Community have raised this matter.

Nothing is more calculated to arouse the anger of the ordinary person in the street than reports of tonnes of butter being sold off cheaply to the Russians because of intervention. The Government apparently are reluctant to supply cut-price butter to Britain's old-age pensioners, even though that would cost less than half the subsidy needed to dispose of it to the Russians. That kind of economics is incomprehensible to most people, and offensive to those who wish to see a proper marketing effort for EEC goods that would benefit consumers and producers.

Are the Government planning to make the butter available to the old and needy in Britain, or to Third world countries, as a short-term food aid measure in difficult times? Many of the elderly people in our society would be delighted at the opportunity to buy cheap butter and many people would be complimentary to the Government and Ministers if they decided on that course in the near future.

The intervention system is basically wasteful. My purpose is to find out whether the Government support the system or whether they have given sufficient thought to alternative forms of marketing that would provide more efficient results. We are well aware that many European countries, especially Germany, are keen to retain the intervention system. We have been told on many occasions that the present Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is keen to hold on to the system. Let us hope that we can persuade the right hon. Gentleman to change his mind and to try to introduce a different marketing system for what we produce in Britain.

The intervention system creates problems for producers, makes some commodities too expensive and denies the British consumer the right to have fresh and reasonably priced food. Can the Minister give us an idea of the storage costs for various products within the Community? Have the Government suggested to their European partners a more efficient marketing method than selling surplus products to the Russians? I read with interest an article that appeared in one of the leading Sunday newspapers a few weeks ago. Is it true that beef cattle are bought for £500, for argument's sake, slaughtered, put into intervention for about six months and

[Mr. Geraint Howells]

then sold to the Russians for the equivalent of £50? That would produce a colossal loss and that sort of marketing should be stopped forthwith.

Is the Minister able to tell us how much food is sold to Russia from the European Community every year? Secondly, can he tell us how much this costs the British taxpayer? Has the Minister given any thought to introducing a deficiency payments scheme for beef cattle to help beef producers? The deficiency payments scheme worked well in Britain for decades until the Tory Government of 1973 did away with it. During 1973-74 we did not have a guaranteed price for beef produced in this country and I am sure that the Minister will remember those days when the store market and the beef markets in many parts of Britain were in dire trouble. We have been told that the intervention buying for beef cattle will be abolished within the next 12 months. Can the Minister give an assurance to beef producers in Britain that the variable premium will be safeguarded and that it will remain, whatever happens to the intervention system?

Has it been calculated how the intervention system affects the British farmer? For example, if there had not been intervention, would there have been the necessity for the damaging quota system that has been imposed on British farmers to deal with the surpluses that have accumulated? Would there have been a different position for Welsh farmers, who have suffered especially badly from the imposition of quotas? With the massive surpluses of grain that are now in storage, it is likely that cereal growers in Britain will face similar quotas. Has the Minister any plans to introduce quotas for cereal growers?

Is there not a case for an improved marketing division within the European Community that could ensure the disposal of European produce to world markets without harming Third world markets, or for working out better ways of marketing within the Community? I have said for years that we can blame our own Government and other Governments within the Community and argue for days on end that we are overproducing in Britain, but it must be realised that the real fault lies with the marketing division within Europe. If we could only control our marketing structure and methods in Europe of disposing of our surpluses, I do not think that British producers would have any need to worry. I am sure that the Minister will agree that confidence is now at a very low ebb in the agriculture industry. When the industry loses confidence in its leaders and in the policy being pursued by the Government that confidence must be restored if the industry and rural life in Wales and elsewhere are to be maintained.

A press release issued by the Farmers Union of Wales on 7 March following a meeting between its president, Mr. Huw Hughes, and Welsh Office agriculture department officials at Aberystwyth on 6 March reads as follows:

"Mr. Hughes said that, against the current background in the EEC, the Union was well aware of the problems facing the Community. The estimated value of UK intervention stocks of foodstuffs—excluding feedwheat and barley—at the end of 1985, was £678 million calculated on the basis of the buying-in prices valid at that time. The estimated value of EEC intervention stocks at the end of November 1985 was around £6,000 million. The most recent estimate of storage and related costs in respect of UK intervention stocks amounted to £102 million."

That is a colossal sum to keep our products in cold storage.

The press release continues:

"He emphasised, however, that as far as European over-production was concerned, the problem sectors were wine, cereals, sugar, and milk. The Community was only just over self-sufficiency levels in beef and veal, and the position was expected to improve by the end of the decade."

If that is true, it is very good news for the livestock sector in Wales and other parts of Britain. The press release further states:

"As far as the sheep sector was concerned, the EEC was well below self-sufficiency levels and was not expected to be self-sufficient by the end of the decade."

I still blame the intervention system. Meat used to be hoarded in biblical times and all these years later we are doing the same thing. We should devise a system within Europe to stop the best products of our agriculture—beef, butter and other commodities—from being put into cold storage for months at enormous cost to taxpayers here and in Europe. Instead of falling out about whether we should have a common agricultural policy, whether we should stay in Europe and what to do about overproduction, if all the European countries got together to discuss marketing as the top priority that would be far more help to all concerned.

12.13 am

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I support my hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) in raising a most important subject.

One of the reasons why farming has acquired such a bad image in recent years is the reference on television and in the other media to mountains of surplus food. Good housekeeping should involve keeping a little surplus, but we now have vast amounts of surplus food. The cost is about 10·5 million ecus and the main surpluses are in dairy products, grain and beef. In the past 12 months the butter surplus has increased by 1 million tonnes. That is a vast quantity, which we feel should be going to the pensioners, not only in Britain, but in other European countries. That would be a far more preferable way of dealing with our surplus products than exporting them to Russia.

The dairy product surplus represents about 31 per cent. of the costs of the surplus, whereas grain costs represent about 14 per cent. of the cost. It is noticeable that the French, in particular, seem to get rid of their surpluses through national aids and apply export credit guarantees for the export of grain by their own grain producers. That is something that we do not seem to be prepared to do. I would like to see international co-operation in the disposal of grain, particularly in relation to the Third world. I would favour the creation of something like an international grain fund, which would operate rather like the International Monetary Fund and would bring surpluses of grain to a central fund so that it could be distributed to those countries most in need and the starving in those nations could be rescued.

There are 750,000 tonnes of beef in surpluses and I believe that we need to attack the system of support in Europe. As we all know, in this country we have a very good system of variable premiums supporting beef. There is no reason why the rest of Europe should not adopt that system, whereby the consumer can get beef at a reasonable price and less beef is placed in store. I believe that at present we are being placed under unreasonable pressure by fellow members of the Community to scrap the variable premium system. That is not in the national interest and it is certainly not in the interests of the European Community, which should be looking at that system as a

method for reducing its vast stocks of beef and ensuring that the consumers of Europe receive that beef at a reasonable price.

12.16 am

The Minister of State Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): I think that it is useful for us to be able to discuss the issue of intervention buying. However, it seems an odd way to approach the European Community. It is rather like saying that one will blame the lifeboats for the storm. The idea that it is the intervention system which is at fault instead of the surpluses seems to be an odd concept.

I share all the desires of the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells). I am a great supporter of the European Community and I am very keen that Britain should not only continue to be a member but should contribute more and more to the growing unity in Europe. However, we will not help the Community if we begin by saying that the system is wrong, rather than the amount that we are producing.

We are over-producing in this country and in the rest of Europe, but it is not just us. It is happening in the United States of America, the Third world, China and India. None of those countries outside Europe has an intervention system. Therefore, it is not the system which has created the surpluses. We have a world in surplus. Last year, for the first time, the Chinese were able not only to feed a quarter of the world's population but to export food. Last year India sent more food aid to Ethiopia than did the whole of the Soviet bloc. Therefore, the idea that there is something special about the intervention system which in some way creates surpluses seems to be a fiction.

The reality is that we live in a world of surplus. Apart from sub-Saharan Africa, and that to a lesser extent this year than before, and the incompetent Soviet Union, there is no major part of the world which cannot feed its own people. However, there are parts of the world in which the distribution, economic system or way of managing the economy means that the surpluses do not reach the poorest people.

We live in a world of surplus, and we have to start there. The idea that by changing the intervention system we would deal with the problem is a falsehood. We have to look at how best to change from a system based on the problem of shortage to a system that will meet the surplus. Intervention provides one of the most sensible ways to deal with a world in which shortfall is feared, in which equality between supply and demand is the aim and where some reasonable method of buying and storage meets that balancing desire.

In other words, that works where one does not have a surplus. Once one has a surplus, intervention becomes an unsatisfactory way of solving our problems, because it is very highly geared. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have read the Prime Minister's speech to the National Farmers Union, in which she referred specifically to the problem of gearing. A 4 per cent. surplus in beef means 50 per cent. more beef in intervention, and a 200 per cent. increase in the cost of it. The whole thing is very tightly geared. In those circumstances, we must look not so much at the system that we have, but at how to reduce the surpluses that give rise to that distortion of the system.

The hon. Gentleman is perfectly right to say that those surpluses cause considerable unhappiness about the nature of the European Community. Any of us who are determined to put forward positive aspects of the Community must be concerned about the way in which those mountains and lakes give to the narrow-minded opponents of the European Community an opportunity to attack a fine institution.

If one wants to deal with the problem, I plead that one should not seek to change the symptoms. One has to get down to the disease. The disease is the surpluses that we are producing. They come not from intervention, but from technological advance and the ability to grow four tonnes an acre where once one could grow only two tonnes. The British dairy herd has much the same number of cows as 10 years ago but is producing 29 per cent. more milk. That is the reality of the nature of technological advance, in terms of breeding and husbandry.

If that is so, what do we do about it? In answer to the questions asked by the hon. Gentleman, I have to say, first, that we need to provide a means of support for the agriculture community that does not make those surpluses inevitable, even though technology makes them possible. Therefore, in dealing with beef, the hon. Gentleman is right to applaud the fact that the Commission is putting forward proposals that will move us away from intervention and towards premium. However, the premium that we want is much more akin to the variable premium. We support the variable premium because it has the great advantage of being linked directly to the market —when the market is good the premium is low, and when the market is poor the premium is high—whereas the fixed premium has the disadvantage of giving the farmer too much when the market is high and too little when the market is low.

The proposals are grossly discriminatory against the United Kingdom, because those premiums are available only for the first 50 head of cattle. We are not prepared to accept that, because we believe that one must not discriminate as though it were possible to use one's basic agricultural support as a means of promoting a certain sort of farming against another sort of farming. That is not what we intend to do in Britain. Therefore, we are determined to see that those are non-discriminatory measures.

If we are to do that, the hon. Gentleman is right to say that we should move — we hope to convince our colleagues of it—away from intervention in that area. But it must be on a fair, non-discriminatory basis, with the satisfactory lessons that Britain has had. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not put forward the case that somehow deficiency payments in general would be a satisfactory answer. If we were to have the same deficiency payments system as before our entry into the European Community, the cost to the British taxpayer would be much greater. The cost is always based on the interpretation of the figures, but it would be up to twice as much as the present cost. It would be an expensive way of doing it.

Mr. Geraint Howells *indicated dissent*

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head. Let me give him the figures as far as I can remember them. Naturally, I was not aware that he would ask that question, but I hope that I am right in saying that the figures are something like this. The Exchequer contribution is about £1·6 billion. With a deficiency payments system, the amount would be closer to £2·5 billion, which would be

[Mr. Gummer]

a considerable increase. That is why the Liberal party does not favour the deficiency payments system. The hon. Gentleman may be in favour of it, but I do not wish to enter into party political issues. This was going to be one of those few occasions when I had an opportunity not to do so. I realise that the Liberal party is divided on this matter, but the official Liberal policy is that we should not return to the deficiency payments system. The Liberals know that the figures do not work out and that, therefore, it would not be reasonable to put that proposition forward.

As for grain surpluses, it is important that the amount of grain produced should be much closer to the amount we need. I beg the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North not to suggest to his farmers the wholly fictitious view that if only we improved the marketing we would be able to sell this grain. That is nonsense. The trouble is that there is no area in which we can sell it or even give it away. The hon. Gentleman wants to give the grain to the Third world, but that is the way to undermine all the incipient farmers there. We are desperate to rebuild those communities. The most imperialist, anti-Third-world policy would flood those markets with wheat and destroy farming in those rural communities. That is opposed by every major aid organisation. Ask the Save the Children Fund, War on Want and even those organisations which have opposing political affiliations to ours what is needed, and they will say that cash is best for aid. Giving large amounts of food aid on a continuing basis undermines the Third world's ability to create its own economy. I say to the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North that if he cares about the Third world he should not lead his farmers down that false alleyway—it is a disgraceful and dangerous path.

Some years ago I spent some time in Mauritania where I saw what happened when there was a constant supply of food aid from outside the country. The result was that indigenous agriculture and nomadic culture and husbandry, which had been the basis of the food supply, were not encouraged. That is what happens if Third world countries are flooded with the over-production of the European Community.

Our job has been to use our surpluses to help the Third world in times of famine when those countries have had no chance of recreating their agriculture, partly because their Governments have purposely destroyed agriculture through their economic policies, as happened in Ethiopia. Where that happens, there is an immediate and urgent, although not a continuing need. The idea that there is a continuing market for food or a proper area to which to give food is contrary to the experience and advice of all those who are involved in giving aid and all those voluntary organisations which we depend for advice.

It is no good telling people that, however sophisticated their markets are, the growing surpluses in Europe can be dealt with, especially the surpluses in perishable goods, such as butter. The hon. Gentleman suggested that we should give butter to the Third world as a means of overcoming the problem, but that is surely contrary to all reason. Many parts of the third world do not want butter. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman must look at the record, because I clearly noted that he suggested that butter should go to the Third world and to pensioners. Giving butter to the Third world would be a misuse of our resources, because that money could be much better used in direct cash aid than in transporting the product to the Third world in parts of which, for all kinds of religious and other reasons, it cannot be used.

I come to the question of the pensioners. The hon. Gentleman is right. It would be extremely advantageous if we could find a way of providing this butter for the pensioners, honourably and decently, to give them something that they would not otherwise have. I very much hope that he was not making a play for their support by saying that, without admitting the problem. Let me be absolutely straight. All our experience, and all the efforts, that we have made to check on this, show that if we provide cheap butter for pensioners, they buy the cheap butter instead of the butter that they would otherwise have bought, and that butter goes into the very intervention stocks that we are trying to run down. That increases the costs of the system.

The hon. Gentleman is asking for the circular system by which we spend more and more money, thus increasing the costs of intervention. I hope that he will join us in fighting to ensure that the Community reduces its surpluses. Let us get rid of the disease. Let us not—as is often the case when we deal with Liberals—deal only with the symptom. Let us stop that, let us get down to the real issue and let us stop playing party politics with this important matter.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 18 March 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

GULL ISLAND PROTECTION BILL [*Lords*]
Read a Second time, and Committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Youth Training Scheme

1. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Paymaster General how many individuals are currently receiving YTS training in the Leith area.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Trippier): I regret that the information is not available in the precise form requested. However, at the end of February, the latest date for which statistics are available, there were 2,113 young people in training in the Edinburgh local authority district.

Mr. Brown: Having learnt the lessons of the case of James McCormack, will the Minister advise the Chancellor of the Exchequer to provide money to compensate trainees which have been injured or maimed through these cheap labour schemes? Will he tell the Chancellor that even a death grant must be provided to families who suffer fatalities? Is he suggesting that the Government, who are allegedly a caring Government, care only about profits and big business, not about the people who matter, particularly youngsters on youth training schemes?

Mr. Trippier: I am aware of the sad case of the hon. Gentleman's constituent and of the fact that compensation was made in that case. I find it very disquieting that the hon. Gentleman should try to rubbish the YTS by referring to it as cheap labour, just as I deplore the fact that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), the shadow spokesman on employment, chose to call the youngsters on the scheme skivvy labour. I cannot think of any greater insult to those young people.

Mr. Colvin: Is my hon. Friend satisfied that enough YTS places are provided by the Civil Service? If not, what can be done to encourage the Civil Service to provide more YTS places in Leith and elsewhere?

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend raises a topical issue. We are considering that matter.

Mr. Wainwright: Is it not a sad reflection on youth training in Edinburgh and elsewhere that, at the recent skill Olympics attended by 19 nations, at which 108 medals were awarded for a great variety of skills, the United Kingdom obtained only two? They were awarded, not for engineering, electronics or manufacturing, but for ladies hairdressing and jewellery.

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman will have to look more positively at YTS. It is, after all, a well tried and proven scheme which has not been found wanting. A very high percentage of youngsters who have participated in it have found full-time employment or gone on to further education. That is what we are concerned about. We know that we have a success. That is why we are developing and strengthening it into a two-year scheme.

Wages

2. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Paymaster General how the wages of the best paid 20 per cent. of employees have changed in relation to inflation since 1979.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Ian Lang): Between 1979 and 1985 increases of about 13 per cent. for full-time men and about 19 per cent. for full-time women were exceeded by 20 per cent. of full-time employees.

Mr. Lloyd: Does the Minister not feel any shame in giving those figures to the House when, over the same period, the number of families on very low pay who have been forced to claim family income supplement has more than doubled? Why are we told that for the low-paid wage cuts will drive them to work, while for the high-paid nothing but massive pay increases are the order of the day?

Mr. Lang: I think that the hon. Gentleman may have his figures wrong. Under this Government the lowest paid 20 per cent. have enjoyed a real increase in income, as, with lower inflation, have many more people, whereas under the Labour Government that was all destroyed by inflation.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Will my hon. Friend confirm that average wages are increasing in real terms? Does he agree that, although this is fine for those in work, it is bad news for the unemployed? Will my hon. Friend impress on the CBI, the TUC and other interested organisations that real wages are increasing less quickly in competing countries?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Average wages for men are increasing by about 10 per cent. and average wages for women are increasing by about 14 per cent. If we could achieve a 1 per cent. across-the-board cut, it might create about 100,000 new jobs.

Mr. Leighton: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the highest paid register the least unemployment and the lowest paid register the highest unemployment? Is he aware that the Contract Cleaning and Maintenance Association told the Select Committee on Employment that, after a Treasury directive following abolition of the fair wages resolution, wages for cleaners in Government Departments and the number of staff were reduced? Has the hon. Gentleman noticed what is happening at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre at Swansea where cleaners on £27 a week have been asked to take a 30p per hour wage cut and to lose their holiday entitlement, and where staff numbers are to be cut from 139 to 102? Does that not make nonsense of pricing people into jobs? Is it not the Government's policy——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is not an Adjournment debate.

Mr. Lang: May I reply to the hon. Gentleman with another example—the electrical contracting industry. In that industry wages for young people were reduced by one third and the number of apprentices recruited increased almost fourfold.

Mr. Prescott: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that the income increase in real terms for the top 20 per cent. has been far higher than the increase in real terms for those on low incomes? Low incomes have decreased and unemployment has occurred. Deregulation in the wealthy City sector of the market has meant more money and jobs for some but less for those on low incomes.

Mr. Lang: There has been a divergence as we moved from the distortions of the last Government's pay policy. The hon. Gentleman should bear in mind that our first Budgets in 1979 took out 1·3 million low-paid taxpayers left in the tax net by the outgoing Socialist Government.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

3. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Paymaster General what is the number and percentage of the total of people on the enterprise allowance scheme under 25 years of age.

Mr. Trippier: On 31 January 1986 there were 13,449 people—25·6 per cent.—under 25 years of age out of a total of 52,516 currently in receipt of the enterprise allowance.

Mr. Lawler: I thank my hon. Friend for that encouraging reply, which shows that the spirit of enterprise is flourishing among young people. Is that proportion increasing? Will my hon. Friend assure the House that every opportunity will be made available to trainees to give them guidance and encouragement on how to become self-employed and how to set up their own businesses?

Mr. Trippier: The figure has increased since the scheme went nationwide on 1 August 1983. The number of young people involved in the enterprise allowance scheme has increased from 17·2 to 25·6 per cent. I shall certainly give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks. A number of programmes are already developing, even in YTS, in which we are trying to stimulate the expansion of enterprise. A number of those youngsters are now working for themselves.

Mr. Bellingham: Is my hon. Friend aware that a significant number of youngsters in King's Lynn have applied to join the scheme but have been turned down? Does he agree that, although this is an excellent scheme, the criteria should be relaxed?

Mr. Trippier: The criteria will be relaxed as from 1 April, when we are reducing the qualifying period from 13 to 8 weeks. I make no apology for the fact that we still want anyone who applies for the EAS to have access to £1,000. If people do not have the wit to get access to £1,000, I very much doubt that they will ever have the wit to run successful businesses of their own.

Youth Wages

4. **Mr. Sheerman** asked the Paymaster General if he will give the figures for the percentage increase in youth wages since 1979.

11. **Mr. Randall** asked the Paymaster General what has been the change in wage levels for under 18-year-olds since 1979.

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Between April 1979 and April 1985 the average earnings of girls increased by 77 per cent. and those of boys by 72 per cent.

Mr. Sheerman: Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that those figures prove that the incomes of young people are increasing much more slowly than adult incomes? Is he aware also that youth unemployment is twice adult unemployment? Is it the Government's policy to prepare a large number of young people for low wages in a dual wage economy of the future?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Member should be pleased that youth unemployment is falling so steadily in Britain. In the three years up to January 1986 unemployment among young people under 18 years fell by 13 per cent. It is important that young people should not expect too high a rate of pay in their first years of work before they acquire the training and experience of their older colleagues.

Mr. Forth: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is totally irresponsible for the Opposition and the trade unions to encourage young people to expect excessively high wages in the early stages of their careers? It is important for us to understand, as the Germans have, that while young people are undergoing training they must expect relatively low rates of pay so that they may justify the full rate when they are fully trained to do the job.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Opposition spokesmen no doubt calculate that it sounds attractive to young people, but their policies would price many more young people out of jobs. The attacks by the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) on the youth training scheme are nothing short of disgraceful, as he has tried to discredit a successful scheme.

Mr. Nellist: If the Minister had given the figures for inflation alongside the figures that he gave in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), they would have shown that for boys leaving school there has been a 12 per cent. fall in their net pay compared with adults in 1979, that there has been a 13 per cent. fall for girls, and that at the same time youth unemployment has trebled. It ill-behoves a Minister of the Government on almost £1,000 a week to tell young workers on £40 or £50 to cut their wages to get more jobs. Wages for youth have fallen and youth unemployment has trebled.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman is ignoring the fact that it is only in the past two or three years that young people's pay has fallen relative to adults' pay. It is only in the past two or three years that the rate of unemployment among young people has fallen. That may be in conflict with the hon. Gentleman's policies, but the facts refute his claims.

Mr. Cockeram: Under the wages council's regulations, are not the wage rates for school leavers 60 per cent. of the adult rate? Is that not one of the highest school leaver rates in western Europe, and is it not a contributory factor to unemployment among school leavers?

Mr. Clarke: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. That is why we have the Wages Bill before the House. We are

reforming a system that has priced too many young people out of the first job that they could have had when they left school.

Job Creation

5. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Paymaster General what steps he will take to co-ordinate growth and employment generating measures with other members of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Clarke: Within the European Council of Ministers, I have been pressing for a change in the agenda of the Social Affairs Council so as to give much higher priority to measures that will promote economic and employment growth within the member states. I am glad to say that there is now widespread agreement among our partners that we should discuss such measures based on sound economic policies which provide for the competitiveness of industry and commerce, the control of inflation and the adaptability of the labour market. I hope we shall be able to make further progress with discussions during the United Kingdom presidency in the second half of the year.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the Paymaster General agree with the Commission, which in its annual economic report said that safeguarding adequate demand is the task of Governments. It also stated that unemployment could be reduced by up to 40 per cent. in the next few years by a co-operative growth strategy. Will the Minister say exactly what he will propose in the Council of Employment Ministers to achieve that sort of growth strategy?

Mr. Clarke: There is a wide range of agreement within the European Council amongst Ministers from all countries and political persuasions that the economic policy based on the principles that I set out was the one to be followed. At the moment the OECD forecast for next year is that the level of unemployment in Europe will remain about stable. That is because it is expecting a fall in unemployment in the United Kingdom and in Germany, which will be offset by a rise in Socialist France and Italy.

Mr. Thurnham: As employment is growing much faster in this country than in the EEC as a whole, will my right hon. and learned Friend make sure that any co-ordination is in an upward direction?

Mr. Clarke: As the number of new jobs created in Britain appears to exceed the number of new jobs created in the rest of the Community, I believe that the Community would be well advised to pay heed to our experience.

Mr. Wigley: Is there not evidence that the imbalance between the "Golden Triangle" and the peripheral regions is still worsening? The principles that the Minister has enunciated this afternoon tend to exacerbate that trend. In view of that, will there not be some development of a strong regional policy within the EEC to get jobs into the regions around the periphery as well as in the centre?

Mr. Clarke: The Council of Ministers that I attend deals mainly with the social fund, but that proves of considerable benefit to Britain, particularly for those parts that are designated as priority areas. It is important that we continue to receive benefit from the social fund for the benefit of the less advantaged parts of the country.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: I welcome the fact that the European countries are at last pulling together in employment policies, but will my right hon. and learned Friend congratulate British industry, as he frequently does, on the fact that it has created more new jobs in the past seven years and that Britain has a higher proportion of people working than any other European country?

Mr. Clarke: I think that Denmark is slightly ahead of us. But, with that slight proviso, my hon. Friend is right to say that a higher proportion of people of working age in the United Kingdom are in employment than in any other EC country, with the possible exception of Denmark, and I hope that we can overtake it.

Labour Statistics

6. **Mr. John Fraser** asked the Paymaster General how many people are now unemployed in Lambeth; and how many were unemployed on 14 April 1981.

Mr. Lang: On 6 February 1986 the number of unemployed claimants in the London borough of Lambeth was 26,362. Comparable figures for April 1981 are not available.

Mr. Fraser: Will the Minister take it from me that since Lord Scarman's inquiry was set up the number of people unemployed in Lambeth has at least doubled? To what extent do the Government take any responsibility for that?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman should also take into account the fact that the number of job vacancies in Lambeth has also been rising. Some 2,000 people in Lambeth are benefiting from our employment and training measures. The urban programme is also putting over £13 million into Lambeth.

Mr. Watts: By how much have the rates in Lambeth increased over the same period, and does my hon. Friend see any connection between the two increases?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is on to a good point. Lambeth is one of the highest overspending authorities in the country. The rates rose 107 per cent. in the three years between 1982 and 1985, and a second year of rate capping is good news for business and employment in Lambeth.

7. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Paymaster General on how many occasions since 1979 the method of counting unemployment has been altered.

Mr. Lang: Since 1979 there have been five changes which have had a discernible effect on the unemployment count, and three of them have been minor. As we announced on 19 February, a further change is about to be made to correct most of the current over-recording.

Mr. Nellist: Would not the effort expended on removing 1·25 million people from the unemployment register be better expended by the Government on a crash programme of public works, such as building houses, schools and hospitals? Is it not the final indignity for the Paymaster General to say, as he did five minutes ago, that youth unemployment in Britain has fallen, when he knows that there has just been a staistical change—a sideways shift into the youth training scheme—not the creation of real jobs for our youth?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman takes an unduly gloomy view of these matters. His interest in statistics has

recently been confined to trying to discover which 50 constituencies have had the biggest rise in unemployment in the past year. I hope that he was not too disappointed that Coventry, South-East was not among them. Unemployment in Coventry, South-East fell by 1·33 per cent.

Mr. Maclean: Will my hon. Friend admit that it is disgraceful that under all Governments those in self-employment and the armed forces have been ignored in compiling unemployment figures? Does he agree that any change which takes account of the excellent job done by our men and women in the armed services and the self-employed is to be welcomed by both sides of the House?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right. Self-employment has been increasingly important in recent years and now accounts for the highest proportion of the total in employment since 1921. The House might also like to be reminded that the previous Labour Government changed the method of counting. In March 1976 they excluded adult students, which at some times of the year could affect the count by 200,000.

Mr. Flannery: Is not the reason why the Minister could not give comparable figures for 1981 that since then there has been another trick in the method of counting the unemployed by the removal of people over 60 and he will not give any figures once a change has been made, but pretends that they do not exist?

Mr. Lang: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman thinks that we should have left figures that we knew to be inaccurate or whether he believes that we should publish accurate figures, as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has agreed should be the case. Among the changes that we have instituted, two of them — fortnightly registration and the inclusion of the severely disabled—have increased the count by 20,000 and 23,000 respectively.

Mr. Ashby: When will a proper analysis of the unemployment figures be made so that we might see the true number of people who are unemployed? Many people will ask how a Government can possibly plan for the future without an accurate knowledge of those who are truly seeking work?

Mr. Lang: As my hon. Friend knows, we are working towards producing a more comprehensive and helpful picture of the unemployed. I am sure my hon. Friend recognises that the unemployment count is based on a kind of snapshot taken on one day of the month. On average, 30,000 people find a job on every working day, which shows how impossible it is ever to have total accuracy.

Ms. Richardson: Does the Paymaster General agree that the exclusion of some married women from the register gives a wholly distorted picture of the number of people wanting work? Will he give the House an estimate of the number of women, for example, who are left out of the register who are ready for work but cannot find child-care provision or someone to look after an adult dependant?

Mr. Lang: I do not have those exact figures with me. However, the hon. Lady may know that part-time employment of women has risen by over 500,000 since 1979. There are people included in the count who are not seeking work, but it is also true that there are people not included who are seeking work.

Mr. Wainwright: Will the Minister get his statisticians, at the same time as they refine the count of those claiming benefit, to publish a monthly estimate of the large number of people who have no benefit to claim but are unemployed and are actively seeking work?

Mr. Lang: There are 870,000 people looking for work who are not on the count and claiming benefit, but, according to the same labour force survey, there are 940,000 people who are not looking for work who are in the count.

Mr. Butterfill: Will my right hon. and learned Friend comment on the observation by the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) that we should spend more money on building hospitals, and compare this Government's programme of hospital building with that of the previous Labour Government?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Our capital investment programme bears comparison with that of any other Government.

Special Employment Measures

8. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Paymaster General when he now expects to respond to the Employment Committee's report on special employment measures and the long-term unemployed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are studying the report very carefully and will submit a detailed memorandum to the Committee as soon as possible.

Mr. Dixon: That answer is not good enough. Is the Paymaster General aware that in my constituency 3,885 men and women have been out of work for over a year and that 43·1 per cent. of those unemployed are long-term unemployed? When will the Paymaster General get off his backside and do something positive about it?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the long-term unemployed are now our most serious social problem. They are not yet sharing fully in the recovery in the jobs market. I would also point out that in the hon. Gentleman's own area of south Tyneside we have greatly increased the amount of adult training that we are giving to people to enable them to be better equipped for jobs. Over the years from 1984-85 to 1985-86 the numbers receiving adult training increased from 1,752 to 4,800. That is a 174 per cent. increase in the south Tyneside area.

Mr. Ralph Howell: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that until we operate the work test we shall never know the true unemployment levels? Is any work being done on the possibility of instituting a proper work test and work fare measures?

Mr. Clarke: All those on the count currently should be genuinely available for work. The most recent labour force survey showed that over 9,000 had not looked for work recently. We also know, as people have said, that there are those not on the count who are seeking work. The trouble is that every time we try to improve these obvious imperfections in the figures the Opposition raise cheap jibes of fiddling because they do not really want to know the true position.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Paymaster General aware that there are many voluntary groups which are already doing job creation along the lines recommended in the

Select Committee's excellent report and that they are stifled and inhibited from doing more only by the Manpower Services Commission's bureaucratic regulations? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman examine the possibility of relaxing the regulations to enable more work to be done along the lines of the report?

Mr. Clarke: The Manpower Services Commission has greatly increased the direct employment measures and training provisions that it provides on behalf of the Government. I will always look at examples of bureaucracy getting in the way of expansion of that, but the community programme, in particular, has been expanded flat out recently and I do not think that it would be practicable to take more people on it.

Mr. Evans: Will the Paymaster-General confirm that there are now more than 1,350,000 people classified as long-term unemployed in this country, that more than 550,000 of them are men aged over 50 and that that is a tragic waste of one of the nation's greatest resources? Does the Paymaster General appreciate that the message of the Select Committee on Employment was a ray of hope to those people? Why does he not accept it and give them more hope?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman knows that we have been concentrating in nine pilot areas on measures that can give help to the long-term unemployed. We have been able to offer individual assistance to the long-term unemployed by giving them a range of job opportunities and training, including the teaching of work application methods, which have benefited individually those who have come forward in our nine pilot areas. Although I share the aims of the Select Committee's report, its proposals are largely impracticable. For example, I do not believe that it would be possible to provide 100,000 one-year jobs for the unskilled and the untrained in the National Health Service and the social services. We have to look for practicable measures, and that is what we have been doing.

Mr. Rowe: When my right hon. and learned Friend last answered questions on this report he gave the very clear impression that he was working to prepare the ground for a guarantee for the long-term unemployed. Since then the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission has told the Select Committee that he could implement such a guarantee, were it to be introduced. I wonder whether this means that my right hon. and learned Friend can bring forward the time when we can look for a guaranteee for at least some of the long-term unemployed?

Mr. Clarke: I have been trying out various ways of bringing additional help to the long-term unemployed. I have visited a scheme in Bolton that offers a guarantee of employment to those who have been unemployed for three years or more. My hon. Friend must await the results of all our considerations.

Youth Employment

9. **Mr. Pike** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the levels of youth employment.

Mr. Trippier: Our youth training measures will help young people to take advantage of the extra jobs which our economic policies are producing.

Mr. Pike: Are the Government not concerned about the very serious high level of real unemployment among the young? Are they not concerned about those who will leave the youth training scheme in April? No provision has been made for them. They will face real unemployment. When will the Government take positive steps to get the young people of this country into jobs?

Mr. Trippier: I cannot believe that the hon. Gentleman heard the replies that were given by my right hon. and learned Friend about the reduction in the level of unemployment among the young. Between January 1985 and January 1986 there was a reduction of 10,900 in the number of young people out of work. Far fewer young people are out of work this year than were out of work last year. That is a smaller proportion of the total number of people who are unemployed.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Will my hon. Friend draw to the attention of a wider audience the extraordinary potential for developing self-employment and encouraging enterprise that the Genesis programme offers within the youth training scheme? Is my hon. Friend able to assure me that the Genesis programme has a secure future?

Mr. Trippier: I have been very impressed by what I have seen of the Genesis programme. It is a management agency which is trying to develop the ethos of self-employment among youth training scheme trainees. Many of those who are on the scheme have set up in business on their own account. I understand that some of them are employing others. The Manpower Services Commission is working on a module which will try to develop and strengthen enterprise within the YTS programme.

Mr. Janner: Does the Minister understand that the continuing and cavalier dismissal of the recommendations of the Select Committee on Employment concerning youth unemployment and general unemployment is disgraceful and that his right hon. and learned Friend has again said that many of the proposals are impracticable? However the Government may massage the unemployment figures, the fact is that this Government are presiding over the highest level of youth and other unemployment in the history of this country and that they are doing very little about it.

Mr. Trippier: I have adequately covered the hon. and learned Gentleman's last point. There has been a reduction in the number of unemployed young people under the age of 18. We are not in any way treating in a cavalier fashion the Select Committee's recommendations. They will receive our full consideration. However, what we want to know, and what my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury wants to know from the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), is who will pay the bill at the end of the day.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that most of the young unemployed had few or no qualifications when they left school and that the teachers' strike has not helped them? Will his Department do everything possible to bring the teachers' industrial action to an early end?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is very wide of the question.

Mr. Trippier: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for drawing my hon. Friend's attention to the fact that that is not a matter for me. However, the point raised earlier by my hon. Friend is a matter for me. There is clear recognition by the Government that our young work force lacks skills. There is a shortage of young people trained in skills, and we have therefore designed programmes and schemes to cope with that.

Mr. Sheerman: May I puncture the Minister's complacency by telling him that one third of a million young people are unemployed and have never been employed? Is he aware that it would take a tripling of the community programme to cater for those up to the age of 25? What do the Government propose to do about the one third of a million young people who have never worked?

Mr. Trippier: We are by no means complacent about the level of youth unemployment. We have been working hard trying to develop schemes and programmes to help those youngsters get jobs. We are clearly on the right lines, as shown by the figures that have been given by my right hon. and learned Friend and by myself.

Lost Working Days

10. **Mr. Gale** asked the Paymaster General how many working days have been lost in industrial disputes over the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A provisional total of 4·4 million working days were lost through stoppages of work due to industrial disputes during the 12 months to 31 January 1986.

Mr. Gale: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there has been a marked improvement in the industrial relations record of recently privatised industries? Does he further agree that that strengthens the case for the early privatisation of other major nationalised industries?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The figure that I have cited includes nearly 2 million days that were lost during the miners' dispute in the year in question. I agree with my hon. Friend that when one looks at the number of stoppages in the year to January 1986, one sees that the figure is the lowest that we have had since the comparable period up to January 1936—50 years ago. There has been a welcome improvement in industrial relations, particularly in the private sector of industry.

Mr. James Lamond: Does the Minister not realise that any drop in the figures is not due to workers being more content with their lot under this Government, but rather is due to the fear of unemployment that hangs over the head of every employed person? The trade unions have been so fettered by the Government that they are afraid to bring out their members to exercise the right that they have had for the whole of this century—the right to stop work if they are dissatisfied with their conditions.

Mr. Clarke: A great deal of the improvement has to do with the introduction of democracy into the trade union movement—pre-strike ballots and the free and secret election of those who lead the trade unions. Those improvements are threatened by the proposals being brought forward by he trade union and labour movement, which, I understand, are to be considered by a conference tomorrow.

Mr. Tim Smith: How many working days were lost because of industrial disputes in the last 12 months of the last Labour Government?

Mr. Clarke: Off the cuff, I do not remember the number of days lost in the winter of discontent, but certainly that was one of the worst years most of us can recall and it shows how dramatic has been the improvement since this Government came to power and improved our industrial relations system.

Mr. Prescott: Will the Paymaster General tell us whether he has carried out a comparison between the last six years of the Labour Government and the six years of this Government? I readily concede that the numbers of disputes has fallen by half, but does he not accept that the number of working days lost is almost approximately the same? That means that the average number of days lost per dispute has risen from 5,000 to nearly 9,000. That is a reflection of the bitterness and the length and cost of strikes and is the result of the Government's trade union legislation.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Gentleman knows that there is a simple reason why our record is much better on the number of disputes but is almost comparable on the number of days lost. It is because of the huge number of days lost in one dispute, the miners' dispute, which was the last fling of violent, undemocratic industrial action and was supported by the Opposition.

Mr. Stokes: Is it not a great mercy that beer and sandwiches no longer need to be provided at 10 Downing street because strikes no longer take place?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have far fewer disputes and we have long given up the ridiculous process of trying to settle them over beer and sandwiches at 10 Downing street or at the Department of Employment.

Labour Statistics

12. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Paymaster General if he will give the latest figure of long-term unemployed in the Merseyside travel-to-work area.

Mr. Lang: On 9 January 1986, the latest date for which figures are available, 55,814 claimants in the Liverpool travel-to-work area had been unemployed for over one year.

Mr. Loyden: When will the Government recognise that unemployment is not a matter of statistics but represents human misery? In the Merseyside travel-to-work area the figure is a scandal. Nothing is being done by the Government about the problem. The bankruptcy of their policies is now exposed. When will they recognise that they have to do something positive for the long-term unemployed?

Mr. Lang: We certainly recognise the misery and anxiety behind the statistics of the unemployed. We are concerned about the problem and are anxious to help. That is why the Government have a wide range of schemes, which are designed specifically to bring help to the long-term unemployed in Merseyside and elsewhere.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend agree that the unemployment level in Merseyside is so high because of the disgraceful behaviour of councillors in that area?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend has a good point. If the public relations policy of councillors, let alone the way in which they run the council, was better, the many good things about Merseyside would become apparent. For example, the vast majority of firms in Merseyside have never been involved in industrial disputes.

Mr. Alton: Is the Minister aware that 78,000 men and 29,000 women in the city of Liverpool alone are currently out of work? Is he aware that prerequisites for employment are a willingness on the part of the local authority to show

less aggression and confrontation and a willingness on the part of the Government to provide a major infrastructure scheme to take skilled people off the dole?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is right about local government. In regard to the role of the Government, I must tell him that Government aid to Merseyside amounted to over £1 billion in the last year, so nobody can say that the Government have not been giving help to Merseyside.

Long-Term Unemployed Persons

13. **Mr. Holt** asked the Paymaster General if there are any indications of the effect of in-depth counselling sessions on the employment opportunites of the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On 6 January 1986 we established a scheme in nine pilot areas to find out whether the long-term unemployed would benefit from individual help and advice. Of those seen, 80 per cent. have been submitted to a job or to other employment or training opportunities, which should enhance their employment prospects.

Mr. Holt: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for that reply, which is most encouraging. Will he extend that policy to new areas, including my constituency? When he is doing so, will he consider the great problems of relocation for many people who can find jobs but for whom moving to a new house in another area is impossible?

Mr. Clarke: We have always said that we would draw such lessons as we could from our scheme in the nine pilot areas as quickly as possible. I take on board my hon. Friend's second point. A great difficulty faces people who leave areas such as his when they find employment in the south-east and have to find a home. I appreciate all the work that my hon. Friend has put in to assist his constituents.

Ms. Clare Short: Does the Minister understand that the cause of unemployment is not the inadequacy of the unemployed in applying for jobs? Does he agree that if the Government continue with these schemes we shall have the most sophisticated unemployed job applicants in western Europe? What we need is a change of economic strategy to provide real jobs at decent wages so that people can make a contribution to society. None of the Government's schemes will help.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Lady ignores the fact that a rapidly increasing number of new jobs are being created in the economy and that there is a rapid increase in the number of vacancies being notified to jobcentres and remaining unfilled. One problem that the long-term unemployed often face, particularly in the more prosperous cities, is that they remain unemployed in a city where plenty of good jobs are available because they lack the skills. That is what we are trying to remedy.

Non-assisted Areas

14. **Mr. Stern** asked the Paymaster General if he will seek European Economic Community funding for special measures to promote employment in non-assisted areas.

Mr. Lang: Support is already available from the European social fund for some types of training and employment schemes in all parts of the country. While the fund's support is rightly concentrated on the areas of highest unemployment, we continue to support its role in promoting employment and training, particularly among disadvantaged groups, in all areas of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Stern: I am grateful for that reply. Does my hon. Friend agree that in many pockets outside the assisted areas, including some in my constituency, unemployment is every bit as high as, if not higher than, unemployment in assisted areas? Will he use his best endeavours to ensure that it is made easier for such pockets of unemployment to obtain the European assistance that is already available in assisted areas?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right. The boundaries for the priority areas are drawn up, not by us, but by the European Commission. Bristol has gained from the fund; over £1·5 million was spent there in 1985.

Youth Unemployment

15. **Dr. Marek** asked the Paymaster General if he will give the figures for the percentage increase in youth unemployment since 1979.

Mr. Trippier: Direct comparisons of unemployment by age since 1979 are not possible because of changes in the way the figures are collected. However, between January 1979 and October 1982 the number of unemployed registrants in the United Kingdom aged under 25 increased by 148 per cent. Between October 1982 and January 1986 the number of unemployed claimants aged under 25 increased by 4 per cent.

Dr. Marek: Does the Minister agree that the figures he has now given to the House about the recent small decline in the number of unemployed youth are only there because he has failed to consider those numbers in relation to the total percentage of youth available for work; that his Department has fiddled the figures by readjusting them every two years; that he has taken many of the young off the unemployment register because of their employment in the youth training scheme; and that young people, if there were real jobs and if they had real training, would go for those real jobs? Would he further agree that he has presided over the highest level of youth unemployment in living memory?

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman cannot possibly say that the Department has fiddled the figures, when his hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) admitted on a television programme that if he had been in the same position as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State he, too, would have accepted the advice of the Department's statisticians.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 18 March.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Fatchett: Last week the Prime Minister said that it was the responsibility of individuals to secure their own homes against the rising crime wave. Could she now tell the elderly of this country who are this week faced with enormous winter heating bills how she expects them to pay for their increased security, or was her reply last week just another example of her not caring for the people of this country?

The Prime Minister: The elderly can get help with crime prevention through the community programme and through the urban programme. In general, it is the personal responsibility of people to secure their own homes against crime, and it is well within their resources, at a time of a record standard of living, to do so. I recognise that the moment personal responsibility is mentioned the Opposition run a mile.

Mr. Onslow: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to congratulate British Aerospace on the spectacular success of its Giotto spacecraft as well as on the fact that, overall, British Aerospace has the largest order book of any British manufacturer? Will she also join me in wishing that the BBC and members of the Opposition would sometimes do more to proclaim the national and international achievements of that privatised company?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I gladly join my hon. Friend in congratulating British Aerospace both on its commercial success and on its excellent performance in research and development, evidence of which is the Giotto project, which excited many of us when we saw it on television last week.

Mr. Steel: Following her meeting yesterday with the chairman of British Airways, Lord King, and the apparent favouritism shown to the General Motors bid for Land Rover, will the Prime Minister take this opportunity to dispel the impression that she is hostile to management-employee ownership of firms?

The Prime Minister: We could hardly be that when we got a management buy-out for Vickers.

Q2. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 18 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hirst: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the right to freedom of speech is a hallmark of a civilised and free society? Does she deplore the recent behaviour of a vocal minority of troublemakers on our university campuses who have sought to deny that right to Members of Parliament, Ministers and even university professors?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. Higher education requires freedom of thought and freedom of speech. It is not for people who expect to have that for themselves to seek to deny it to others. I believe that most people condemn that action and that most vice-chancellors, particularly after the statements they have made, will be very anxious to do all they can to ensure that it does not occur again.

Q3. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 18 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Corbyn: Is the Prime Minister aware that her Government's first Budget in 1979 gave away more than £2 billion to those earning more than £20,000 a year, and that since her election in 1979 her Government have given £15,000 million in tax benefits to the wealthiest sector of the country? At the same time, taxation rates have never been higher for those earning less than £20,000 a year and unemployment has never been higher? Does she not agree that her Government's record is one of selflessly working for the wealthiest minority in the country?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir. Income tax has been cut by £6 billion, which is the equivalent of £260 a year for a married man on average earnings. Real take-home pay for a married man on half average earnings has risen since 1979 by 11 per cent., compared with only 2·5 per cent. under Labour.

Q4. **Mr. Neil Thorne** asked the Prime Minister is she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 18 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Thorne: Will my right hon. Friend take time to consider the extraordinary behaviour of the leaders of the Opposition in their attitude—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must ask a question about a subject for which the Prime Minister has responsibility.

Mr. Thorne: What is my right hon. Friend's response to the Opposition's behaviour—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: That still does not fall within the Prime Minister's responsibility. The hon. Member can have one more go.

Mr. Thorne: Will my right hon. Friend consider the attitude of politicians who behave in such a way as to censor journalists acting for News International by refusing to contribute to its newspapers? Is that not one of the major reasons for the amount of violence on the picket lines at Wapping?

The Prime Minister: We totally condemn the censorship which is being practised in certain parts of the House against Mr. Murdoch and News International. We also condemn the censorship being practised against the Mirror Group in Scotland. We hope that others will join us in condemning such action.

Q5. **Mr. Evans** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 18 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evans: Why is the Prime Minister continuing her vindictive and cruel vendetta against the democratic, civil and individual rights of trade unionists at GCHQ?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary is seeing the GCHQ unions later this afternoon. The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the action, which has been condemned, that Civil Service unions took during the strike, and of the selective action that they took against the security organisations upon which we depend so much for our defence.

Mr. Jim Spicer: Will my right hon. Friend accept the thanks of all the workers at Westland Helicopters for the efforts that she made on their behalf to secure the Indian contract?

The Prime Minister: The Indian order for Westland Helicopters has now been signed. That is a great relief and is very welcome. I first broached the subject with Mrs. Gandhi many years ago.

Q6. **Mr. O'Neill** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 18 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. O'Neill: Will the Prime Minister tell the House and the country why she felt it more important to address Conservatives in Lowestoft last Saturday than to pay tribute to Olof Palme at his funeral?

The Prime Minister: I hope—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: I hope that most people will understand that party political conferences, which are fixed from year to year, naturally command the attention of a leader. I shall be attending Mr. Palme's memorial service on Thursday morning.

Mr. Gow: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it remains the Government's policy to return British Airways to genuine public ownership at the earliest possible moment?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister aware that many hundreds of worthwhile and vitally necessary, voluntary organisations in various localities have not yet been told whether they will continue to receive support after the Greater London council and metropolitan county councils cease to exist at the end of this month? As she must recognise the value of those organisations, and as her Ministers gave assurances about the continuation of support for them, will she ensure that emergency attention is given before 1 April?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman will be aware, many of the obligations were taken over either by central Government, as is the case with many organisations linked with the Arts Council, or by local authorities. Local authorities must consider those matters that have not yet been satisfactorily resolved.

Mr. Kinnock: In view of the Government's undertakings and the nature of many of the organisations, such as Age Concern, the widows' organisation, Cruse, playgroups and pensioner groups, will she accept that it is unfair to inflict further worries on the people who run voluntary organisations and on the many people who use them? Will she revise her answer to ensure that the Government accept their full responsibility?

The Prime Minister: The Government already give many headquarters grants to an enormous number of voluntary organisations. Indeed, speaking from memory, I think that taxpayers give more than £400 million to voluntary organisations.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Macclesfield district is one of the best in the country for youth training and youth employment prospects because of the responsible local authority in the area and the positive attitude of employers? Of the 2,000 school leavers on the last occasion, only 35 are now unemployed. Does that not give her encouragement that her policies are working? Even at this late stage, will she prevail upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer not to impose any added costs on industry and commerce?

The Prime Minister: On the latter point, my hon. Friend must await what the Chancellor of the Exchequer has to say. I congratulate my hon. Friend's local authority on its work with youth training schemes. It is important that we have the co-operation of local authorities and the supreme interest of employers. I congratulate my hon. Friend on what the local authority has done, and commend its example to others.

Oswaldtwistle

Q8. **Mr. Hargreaves** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to pay an official visit to Oswaldtwistle.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Mr. Hargreaves: The people of the Quadrangle area of Oswaldtwistle will share my disappointment at that reply. Does my right hon. Friend agree that home improvement grants are the most cost-effective method of providing decent houses for our people? If so, will she have a final word with our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer so that he also gets the message?

The Prime Minister: Home improvement grants have been an excellent way of renovating many houses, and the level is still comparatively high compared with what it was when we came to office. A number of good rehabilitation schemes involving housing associations and the Housing Corporation have raised the standard of housing in my hon. Friend's area. Instead of bringing the bulldozer in, they have done up some terraced houses, to the great benefit of the people who live there.

Engagements

Q9. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 18 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Does the Prime Minister accept that the growing differential between pay for those in work, who have increased their rates beyond the rate of inflation, and those out of work is an embittering factor in our society? Will the Government's post-Budget policies narrow that differential and reduce the bitterness?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is correct in saying that most people in work have had substantial pay increases and increases in net take-home pay. How much those out of work get depends on their particular circumstances and social security benefits. In some cases it is necessary to widen the gap between what they receive in social security benefits and what they receive in work.

Mr. Grylls: Is my right hon. Friend aware that most people will applaud the Government's decision to allow Vickers Shipbuilders to be returned to the private sector by means of a management buy-out? Will she assure the

House that the Government will give careful consideration to the proposed management buy-out from Land Rover group, which has blue chip financial backing, and will allow the company and the people who work in it to enjoy the future success of Land Rover?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is giving close consideration to all the bids for parts of British Leyland, and will make a statement when he is in a position to do so, but that is not yet.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Prime Minister find time today to take to heart the anger of the leaders of disablement organisations at the intention of the Government to emasculate the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill, which provides for those most in need, the carers who look after disabled people? Will the Government reconsider their position?

The Prime Minister: As hon. Members will know, the Government's position is to try to secure a Bill that is workable and that will continue to be so. I must also point out that the record of this Government on providing increased help for the disabled is outstanding, and greatly exceeds that of any previous Government.

Q10. **Mr. Martin** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 18 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Martin: Is it not madness that British Rail is closing railway workshops at a time when our railway engineering stock needs modernising? Will the right hon. Lady intervene in this matter?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, some of the new rolling stock requires much less maintenance and redesigning than the old, and we are not able to keep workshops open unless there is work for them to do.

BILL PRESENTED

CHESTERFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL (GENERAL POWERS)

Mr. Tony Benn presented a Bill to confer general powers upon the Chesterfield Borough Council; to restrict the powers of the District Auditor in relation to that Council; and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Wednesday 19 March and to be printed. [Bill 106.]

Liverpool (Delegation)

3.31 pm

Mr. Robert Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want to ask for your guidance on an issue which has been raised in my constituency.

On 11 February I wrote to the Secretary of State for the Environment about the problem arising from the threatened closure of Croxteth park and Croxteth hall in my constituency. On 5 March I received an answer from Lord Elton, Minister of State. Among other things, he said that he did not believe that there was anything further that could be gained from meeting a delegation. I had asked him to meet a delegation from my constituency. Yet this morning my attention has been drawn to an article in last Thursday night's *Liverpool Echo* which states:

"Lord Elton, a Minister from the Department of the Environment, met Mossley Hill MP David Alton and members of the Croxteth Community Forum to discuss the park's plight."

I have written to the noble Lord, because I believe that he must have known when he wrote to me, and must have had in his diary, the date of the meeting with the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton). We need your protection, Mr. Speaker, when the Minister is not in this House to answer questions.

Yesterday, the right hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. St. John-Stevas) stated — I believe you would be in accord with that statement Mr. Speaker — that when issues arise in a Member's constituency, that matter should be the concern only of that Member. As the only Member representing the constituents of Liverpool, West Derby, I ask you to protect me from any usurper.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. We also confirm that it is the job of any Member of this House when representations are made to take up grievances which concern—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The point of order is to me. I cannot hear.

Mr. Alton: It is the job, Mr. Speaker, of Members of this House, when their constituents are employed in an institution, in whichever constituency it may be, or if their constituents use a facility, to take up that issue and to do their job on behalf of their constituents.

Mr. Speaker: I must say in reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) that this took place last Thursday, and I think there would have been opportunities to raise it other than today. It is not a matter for me whether a Minister sees a delegation or not. The hon. Gentleman must take that matter up with the Minister. As to the other matter, it is a convention—the whole House knows this—that we do not take up cases in each other's constituencies. That is a convention to which I think we should hold.

WAYS AND MEANS

Budget Statement

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Before I call the Chancellor of the Exchequer, it may be for the convenience of hon. Members if I remind them that at the end of the Chancellor's speech, as in past years, copies of the Budget resolutions will not be handed around in the Chamber but will be available to hon. Members in the Vote Office.

3.35 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): The background to this year's Budget——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is mass unemployment.

Mr. Lawson: —is the dramatic and unprecedented fall in the world oil price. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] But the Government's objectives remain unchanged: the conquest of inflation and the creation of an enterprise culture. *[Interruption.]* And the Government's policies are unchanged, too: policies of sound money and free markets, not least, because these are the only routes to more jobs, and jobs that last.

So my Budget today will carry forward the themes of my two previous Budgets, and sow some seeds for the future. In the course of my speech, I shall begin by reviewing the general economic background to the Budget, and go on to deal with the specific issue of oil. I shall next discuss monetary policy and the fiscal prospect, both this year and next. I shall then turn to the question of direct help for the unemployed. Finally, I shall propose some changes in taxation designed to assist in achieving the economic objectives I have already outlined. As usual, a number of press releases, filling out the details of my proposals, will be available from the Vote Office as soon as I have sat down.

THE ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

I start with the economic background. The strength and durability of the current economic upswing continues to confound the commentators. We can now look back to five solid years of growth at around 3 per cent. a year. *[Interruption.]* Even more important, 1985 was the third successive year in which we secured the elusive combination of steady growth and low inflation—the first time this has been achieved since the 1960s. In 1985 as a whole, output grew by a further 3½ per cent., which was the highest rate of growth in the European Community, and higher than the United States, too. Within that total, non-oil exports grew by 7 per cent., to reach yet another all-time record.

Despite a marked slowdown in the growth of world trade from the heady pace of 1984, the current account of the balance of payments was in surplus for the sixth year in succession—this time by some £3 billion. Inflation ended the year at around 5½ per cent. and falling. Employment continued to rise, although still not fast enough to reduce the distressingly high number of people out of work. [HON. MEMBERS: "Record unemployment."] I shall have more to say about unemployment later. Manufacturing industry, the subject of so much ill-informed comment, had another successful year, with its

[Mr. Lawson]

output up by 3 per cent., its productivity up by almost 4 per cent., and both its investment and its exports up by 6 per cent.

At the heart of this success lies a remarkable turn-around in productivity. In the six years prior to 1979, Britain's annual rate of growth of manufacturing productivity, at less than 1 per cent., was the lowest of all the Group of Five major industrial nations. In the six years since 1979, our annual rate of growth of manufacturing productivity, at 3½ per cent., has been second only to that of Japan.

Looking ahead, I expect 1986 to be a further year of steady growth with low inflation. Indeed, with output forecast to rise by 3 per cent., and inflation to fall to 3½ per cent., 1986 is set to register our best overall performance in terms of output and inflation for a generation. The pattern of growth should show a satisfactory balance, too, with exports and investment expected to grow rather faster than consumer spending as a whole — as indeed they have during the sustained upswing. But the uncertainties inherent in all these forecasts, good though their track record has been, are reinforced by constant reminders that we live in an uncertain and turbulent world.

One particularly difficult aspect of this is the febrile nature of the world currency markets. There has been some improvement here. The Plaza agreement between the Group of Five Finance Ministers last September has undoubtedly led to a more sustainable pattern of exchange rates worldwide. Since that meeting, the dollar has fallen by some 16 per cent. against the other major currencies as a whole, with the pound moving up by 7 per cent., the deutschmark by 26 per cent. and the yen by 36 per cent. —a pattern broadly in line with what those of us who were party to the agreement had hoped to see.

This process will be assisted further if the passage of the Gramm-Rudman amendment manages to secure its objective of a much-needed reduction in the United States budget deficit. Meanwhile, the Plaza agreement has already succeeded in reducing, at least for the time being, the dangerous protectionist pressures that were building up in the United States. Provided we are not over-ambitious, I believe that the Plaza accord is something we can usefully build on. But the most dramatic development on the world economic scene, and one of considerable importance to this country, has of course been the collapse in the price of oil.

OIL

I presented my Budget last year at the end of a 12-month coal strike. I observed at the time that it was a remarkable tribute to the underlying strength of the British economy that it had been able to withstand so long and damaging a strike in such good shape. We now have to face a challenge of a very different kind. Over the past few months, the price of oil has almost halved, and with it our prospective North sea oil tax revenues and earnings from oil exports. In real terms, the price of oil is now back to what it was at the end of 1973.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, this initially caused a fair amount of turmoil in the financial markets, with sterling under pressure. I decided that it was right to respond with an immediate 1 per cent. rise in short-term interest rates in early January, and this helped to prevent the downward movement of the exchange rate from developing an unhealthy momentum of its own. But equally I thought it right to resist the pressure, which for a time was very strong indeed, to raise interest rates still further. That pressure in due course subsided, and, though the financial markets remain somewhat volatile, the mood has changed considerably, assisted by a modest but welcome reduction in interest rates overseas.

Meanwhile, let me repeat that there is no question whatever, and never has been any question, of the United Kingdom cutting back its oil production in an attempt to secure a higher oil price. In the first place, the whole outstanding success of the North sea has been based on the fact that it is the freest oil province in the world—[HON MEMBERS: "We need to be."]—in which decisions on levels of output are a matter for the companies and not for the Government. In the second place, we are not only, or even principally, a major oil producer; we are also a major world producer and trader of many other goods and services, and a major oil consumer.

There is no overall United Kingdom national interest in keeping oil prices high. I am of course aware that a report, recently published in another place, and which attracted a certain amount of publicity at the time, predicted:

"as the oil revenues diminish the country will experience adverse effects which will worsen with time"—

effects, it was said, of a most alarming nature. Had the authors of that report dreamed at the time they wrote it that half the oil revenues were about to disappear within a matter of months, their conclusions would no doubt have been even more apocalyptic. As the House knows, I have always believed their analysis, which was widely shared by Opposition Members, to be profoundly mistaken. Certainly, it will be put to the test sooner than anyone expected.

The United Kingdom is likely to remain an oil producer, of a gradually diminishing volume of oil, for the next 25 years or so. If we can survive unscathed the loss of half our North sea oil revenues in less than 25 weeks, the prospective loss of the other half over the remainder of the next 25 years should not cause us undue concern. *[Laughter.]*

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lawson: It is, of course, true that in relative terms we do lose from the collapse of the oil price—the really big gains will be made by the major non-oil-producing countries, such as Germany and Japan, where growth will be boosted and inflation, already low, is likely to fall virtually to zero.

Inevitably, we suffer a decline, too, in the value of our net oil exports. But the oil price fall will be beneficial for the industrialised world as a whole. Even for the United Kingdom, what we gain on the swings should, over time, more than offset what we lose on the roundabouts. In particular, I expect that the levels of economic activity and inflation will, if anything, be slightly better than they would have been without the oil price collapse.

What of the balance of payments? Thanks to the abolition of exchange controls in 1979, we have been able to use a good part of our earnings from North sea oil since then to build up a massive stock of overseas assets. Our net overseas assets have, in fact, risen more than sevenfold from £12 billion at the end of 1979 to almost £90 billion at the end of last year. This is a far bigger total than that

possessed by any other major nation, with the perhaps inevitable exception of Japan. The earnings from those assets will be of increasing value to our balance of payments in the years ahead — so, too, should the improvement in our manufacturing trade balance.

Although the British economy may not gain a great deal overall as a result of the oil price collapse, there will be considerable differences within the economy. The major potential beneficiary will be the international trading sector of industry in general, and manufacturing in particular, which is already enjoying both lower oil costs and a lower exchange rate against most of its major competitors, at a time when inflation is falling.

This provides British industry with an outstanding opportunity both to increase its exports and to reduce import penetration in the home market, but it will only be able to seize that opportunity if it meets two conditions. First, it must keep firmer control of its labour costs. Secondly, it must spend more of its much healthier level of profits on investing for the future in research and development and in training. Both the opportunity, and the responsibility to see that it is not thrown away, rest fairly and squarely on the shoulders of British management. Meanwhile, despite the massive fall in oil prices, I expect the current account of the balance of payments to remain in sizeable surplus this year, by some £3½ billion.

As I have indicated, there will be pluses and minuses within the economy. If industry is the main gainer, the main loser, at least today, is the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I can live with that, but it does mean that North sea oil revenues, which are likely to amount to some £11½ billion for 1985-86, are bound to be very much less in 1986-87. Indeed, on the assumption of an average North sea oil price for the rest of this year of $15 a barrel, which is close to the average published price for the past month of around $16 a barrel, oil revenues in 1986-87 will be virtually halved, at some £6 billion. This has obvious implications for the Budget, but the important fact is that, just as we successfully weathered a year-long coal strike, so we have been able to take the unprecedented collapse in the oil price in our stride.

We have been able to do so, first, because of the underlying strength of the economy in terms of growth, inflation and the external account; and, secondly, by virtue of the reputation we have earned over seven years for sound and prudent financial management.

MONETARY POLICY

The framework within which that sound and prudent financial management has been pursued, and will continue to be pursued, is the Government's medium-term financial strategy. It provides as firm a guarantee against inadequate money demand as it does against excessive money demand. At the heart of the MTFS lies the objective of steadily reducing the growth of total spending power in the economy, as measured by GDP in cash terms, at a pace that will gradually squeeze inflation out of the system while at the same time leaving adequate room for sustained growth in real output——

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): What about money supply?

Mr. Lawson: —and that we have done.

Over the past six years the rate of growth of money GDP has been halved, and a further significant reduction is envisaged for 1986-87. This has brought about a combination of low inflation and steady growth. We shall continue to maintain steady downward pressure on inflation. That means, above all, controlling the growth of money in the economy.

Last year I set target ranges of 3 to 7 per cent. for narrow money, MO, and 5 to 9 per cent. for broad money, sterling M3. During 1985-86, the targeted measure of narrow money has grown towards the bottom end of its range. The target range for next year will be 2 to 6 per cent. as foreshadowed in last year's MTFS.

For broad money it has been clear since the autumn that the range was set too low. Throughout the 1980s—and in sharp contrast to the 1970s—broad money has grown far faster than money GDP. Experience has demonstrated that this has not posed a threat to inflation. This rapid growth largely reflects the increased attractions of holding interest-bearing deposits, at a time both of low inflation and high real interest rates, and of innovation and liberalisation in the financial system. Accordingly, I am setting next year's target range for broad money well above that indicated in last year's MTFS, at 11-15 per cent. Given the experience of the past six years, I believe this is not only a more realistic range, but one which is wholly consistent with the further decline in inflation which I intend to achieve.

Short-term interest rates are the essential instrument of monetary policy. Changes in interest rates have a reasonably quick and direct effect on narrow money, as they do on the exchange rate. Their effect on braod money is more complex and much more delayed. As explained in the Red Book, there is thus an important difference in the operational significance of the targets for narrow and broad money. Needless to say, I shall continue to monitor the evidence of other financial indicators, of which the most important is the exchange rate. I will say no more about monetary policy — [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]—except to repeat what I said at the Mansion house last Autumn: that while financial liberalisation and innovation have inevitably made the process of monetary management more complicated, there has been no change whatever in the essence of policy. The Government continue to attach the highest priority to sound money.

PUBLIC SECTOR BORROWING

Though there is nothing sacrosanct about the precise mix, monetary policy must always be supported by an appropriate fiscal policy. That means, in plain English, keeping borrowing low.

The outturn for the public sector borrowing requirement in 1984-85, which had to bear the bulk of the cost of resisting the coal strike, was £10 billion, or just over 3 per cent. of GDP. In my Budget last year I planned to reduce it substantially in 1985-86, to £7 billion, or 2 per cent. of GDP. In the event, despite the loss of £2 billion of north sea oil revenue, this year's PBSR looks like turning out at a little under £7 billion, given that the total for the first 11 months of this year comes to under £3 billion.

This successful outcome, which represents the most substantial reduction in the PSBR as a proportion of GDP since 1981-82, is attributable to two factors. First, public expenditure has been kept under firm control. Not only is the outturn likely to be within the planning total, but spending in 1985-86 is expected to be below the previous year's level in real terms, even after allowing for the

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effects of the coal strike. The second factor behind the successful PSBR outturn for 1985-86 is that the £2 billion shortfall in oil revenues has been offset by the increased buoyancy of non-oil revenues, reflecting a healthy economy and an increasingly profitable corporate sector.

Last year's MTFS indicated a PSBR for 1986-87 of £7½ billion, or 2 per cent. of GDP. Some would argue that, in the light of the £2½ billion increase in projected privatisation proceeds, I ought to aim well below that. Others on the other hand would claim that, since the sharp drop envisaged in oil revenues is more than double the rise in privatisation proceeds, a higher figure would be appropriate.

As last year, my judgment is that the wisest course is to stick broadly to our pre-announced figure, but, given the uncertainties over the oil price, I have decided, within that framework, to err on the side of caution, and provide for a PSBR of £7 billion, or 1¾ per cent. of GDP.

Needless to say, that does not enable me to reduce taxation by anything like the £3½ billion foreshadowed in last year's MTFS. Indeed, given the assumed loss of £5½ billion of oil revenues in 1986-87, compared with what was envisaged a year ago, I would have expected to have had to increase taxes in this year's Budget. However, not only have the tax revenues this year from the 95 per cent. of the economy that is not oil proved to be notably buoyant, but there is every sign that this will continue into 1986-87, assisted by a rather higher rate of economic growth than was foreseen in last year's MTFS.

The continued vigour of the non-North sea economy, which is likely to add well over £3 billion to expected non-North sea tax revenues, coupled with public spending which remains under firm control, has transformed what might otherwise have been a bleak prospect. As a result, I am able this year to accommodate a relatively modest net reduction in the real burden of taxation, of a shade under £1 billion. It may well be that the oil price turns out to be different from the average of $15 a barrel, which I have assumed for this year's Budget, but if any departure is purely short term, it is most unlikely to have any significance for policy.

HELP FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

I turn now to the continuing problem of high unemployment. It is a problem that can be solved—and there is no secret about how. The solution to the problem of unemployment — it is the only solution — requires progress on two key fronts. The first is a sustained improvement in the performance of business and industry, and thus of the economy as a whole. That is what every aspect of the Government's economic policy has been designed to assist, and it is already achieving impressive results. The second is a level of pay which enables workers to be priced into jobs instead of pricing them out of jobs, and which in particular ensures that British industry can hold its own against our major international competitors.

It is here that Britain's weakness lies. The plain fact is that labour costs per unit of output in British business and industry continue to rise faster than is consistent with low unemployment and faster than our principal competitors overseas. Productivity is, certainly rising quite rapidly, but pay is rising faster still.

It is this—and not our alleged dependence on oil—that constitutes the Achilles' heel of the British economy.

In a free economy — as the CBI has frankly and commendably acknowledged—it is the responsibility of employers and management to control industry's cost structure in general and its wage costs in particular. In the new and improved climate of industrial relations, and with inflation falling and set to fall further, there can be no excuse for failure to discharge that responsibility. I have, however, considered whether there is anything further Government can do to assist this over the longer term.

The problem we face in this country is not just the level of pay in relation to productivity, but also the rigidity of the pay system. If the only element of flexibility is in the numbers of people employed, then redundancies are inevitably more likely to occur. One way out of this might be to move to a system in which a significant proportion of an employee's remuneration depends directly on the company's profitability per person employed. This would not only give the work force a more direct personal interest in their company's success, as existing employee share schemes do; it would also mean that, when business is slack, companies would be under less pressure to lay men off; and by the same token they would, in general, be keener to take them on.

This would clearly be in industry's own interest, and most emphatically in the best interests of the unemployed. It should therefore occur without any prompting from Government. But there is considerable inertia to overcome, so it might make sense to offer some temporary measure of tax relief to the employees concerned to help get profit-sharing agreements of the right kind off the ground, and to secure the benefits that would undoubtedly accrue if they really caught on.

Inevitably, the design of such a relief, and the precise definition of qualifying agreements, would need to be drawn with considerable care. The Government therefore propose to discuss with employers and others to see if a workable scheme can be defined which offers the prospect of a worthwhile and broadly based take-up. If these preliminary discussions were sufficiently encouraging, we would prepare a consultative document setting out a detailed scheme for wider consideration.

Meanwhile, there is more we can do of an immediate nature to help the unemployed. In my Budget last year I announced the Government's intention to launch a new two-year youth training scheme, leading to recognised vocational qualifications. The new and expanded YTS will duly come into operation next month. It will be a giant step towards our objective of ensuring that no youngster under the age of 18 need be unemployed.

I also announced in last year's Budget a substantial expansion of the community programme to help the long-term unemployed—those who have been out of work for over a year, or, in the case of those between 18 and 24, for more than six months. The community programme, which offers work for up to a year on projects of benefit to the community, is currently providing almost 200,000 places. I have agreed with my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment to provide the funds to raise the eventual target for this year to 255,000 places—very nearly double the number that existed a year ago..

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): You used to say these were not real jobs.

Mr. Lawson: At the same time, the average wage limit for the community programme will be increased to £67 a week from next month.

Last November, my right hon. and noble Friend announced two pilot schemes to provide further help for the long-term unemployed. These new initiative, which began in January, are a counselling scheme open to all the long-term unemployed in the pilot areas, and a jobstart allowance of £20 a week for six months for those long-term unemployed who take a job at less than £80 a week.

Mr. Prescott: Tea and sympathy.

Mr. Lawson: These pilot schemes are already producing results, and I have accordingly decided to provide the funds to develop them into a single programme covering the entire country. This means that every single one of the long-term unemployed throughout the land will be offered individual help and advice in finding a job.

Mr. Prescott: But no job.

Mr. Lawson: I shall also be providing the resources to launch a brand new scheme—the new workers scheme —to help 18 to 20-year-olds to find a job. This will provide for a payment of £15 a week for a year to any employer taking on an 18 or 19-year-old at up to £55 a week or a 20-year-old at up to £65 a week. The new workers scheme should provide a worthwhile incentive for employers to create jobs for young people.

Finally, I have agreed to a substantial enlargement of the proven and highly successful enterprise allowance scheme — [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] — which makes payments of £40 a week for up to a year to assist unemployed men and women to set up in business on their own account. Funds will be provided that will enable the annual rate of entry to the enterprise allowance scheme to be increased steadily from its present figure of 65,000 to 100,000 by April 1987, and to provide more training for those involved. At the same time I propose to improve the tax treatment of payments made under this scheme.

The total public expenditure cost of the measures I have outlined, together with consequential spending in Northern Ireland, comes to £195 million in 1986-87 and £285 million in 1987-88. These gross costs will, however, be partly offset by savings on social security benefits, leaving a net public expenditure cost of £100 million in 1986-87 and £165 million in 1987-88. This will be financed from the reserve, and there will therefore be no overall addition to planned public spending.

BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE

I now turn to the taxation of business and enterprise. [HON. MEMBERS: "Is that all about jobs?"] Hon. Members opposite would do well to listen. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] While the measures I have just announced help the unemployed directly, in the long run what really matters is the creation of a climate in which business and industry flourish. For it is companies, not Governments, which create jobs. The reformed system of business taxation which I introduced in my 1984 Budget has reached the end of its transitional phase and comes fully into force next month. From then on the United Kingdom will have, at 35 per cent., the lowest rate of corporation tax of any major industrial nation.

This year I have only two further amendments to make. First, I propose to ensure a full measure of depreciation for tax purposes for short-life agricultural buildings and works, by giving the taxpayer the option of making balancing adjustments on the sale or destruction of such buildings. Secondly, I propose to reform the mines and oil wells allowances broadly along the lines of the proposals published in last July's consultative document. The overall net benefit of this to the industries concerned will amount to £45 million in 1987-88. Otherwise I propose only minor technical changes to the taxation of North sea oil; but I am continuing to keep the economics of incremental investment under review, and shall not hesitate to introduce at the earliest opportunity any changes which may prove necessary to ensure that worthwhile projects are not frustrated by the fiscal regime.

I need to set the 1987-88 car and fuel benefit scale charges for those with company cars. At the same time, the motor industry has represented to me that the discrepancy between the engine size break points in these scales and the break points in the new European Community directive on car exhaust emissions is potentially damaging to its international competitiveness. Accordingly, I propose, from April 1987, to change our break points to those in the new directive.

At the same time, as last year, I propose to increase the restructured car benefit scale charges by 10 per cent. This will still leave the scale charges well short of the true value of the benefit. The fuel scale will also be restructured, but there will be no general increase in the charges; and as from April 1987 the same scale will also be used to assess the VAT due on petrol used by registered traders and their employees. This will be simpler and more equitable than the present system, and will also bring in an extra £40 million of revenue in 1987-88.

I propose to increase the VAT threshold to £20,500, in line with the maximum permitted under existing European Community law.

I also propose to correct an anomaly in the taxation of international entertainers and sportsmen. When British entertainers or sportsmen work overseas, the foreign tax authorities normally levy a withholding tax on their earnings, but at the present time we levy no such tax on the earnings of foreign entertainers and sportsmen when they work in the United Kingdom. I believe that in future we should fall into line with most of the rest of the world. Accordingly, I propose to withhold tax at the basic rate on the earnings of overseas entertainers and sportsmen in the United Kingdom. This should yield £75 million in 1987-88.

A key element in the Government's strategy for jobs is the encouragement of new businesses. As the House knows, I have been reviewing the future of the business expansion scheme, which is due to come to an end in April 1987. I have been assisted in this review by the independent report commissioned by the Inland Revenue from the consultants Peat Marwick which is being published in full today. I am placing a copy in the Library of the House.

It is quite clear—this is confirmed by the evidence in the Peat Marwick report—that the business expansion scheme, which my predecessor introduced in 1983 as an improvement on the 1981 business start-up scheme, has been an outstanding success. It has fully achieved its aim of attracting new equity capital into unquoted companies. The amount subscribed has been running at well over £100 million a year, and steadily rising; and a high proportion

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of this has gone into new and small businesses. Roughly half the companies involved raised sums of less than £50,000 each.

Mr. Straw: How many in manufacturing?

Mr. Lawson: I therefore have no hesitation in proposing to extend the life of the business expansion scheme indefinitely. But at the same time, despite the exclusions of farmland and property development in my two previous Budgets, I am still concerned that too much BES money is being diverted from the high-risk areas for which the scheme was always intended into areas where the risk is very much less. Accordingly, I propose from now on to exclude from the scheme all companies holding more than half their net assets in the form of land and buildings. I also propose to exclude companies whose main purpose is to invest in objects, such as fine wines, whose value may be expected to rise over time. *[Interruption.]*

At the same time, I have one new inclusion to announce. I have decided to bring within the scope of the BES companies engaged in the chartering of United Kingdom-registered ships. This will provide new opportunities for investment in shipping engaged in the coastal, short sea and offshore trades. I propose to take power to make further changes in the ambit of the scheme by order.

Finally, having taken steps to target the business expansion scheme more carefully, I propose to improve it. BES shares issues after today will be entirely free of capital gains tax on their first sale. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] As a further measure of help for small and new businesses, the loan guarantee scheme, under which the Government guarantee 70 per cent. of qualifying bank loans, will also be extended, in this case for a further three years. The House will be glad to learn that the premium will be halved, from 5 per cent. to 2½ per cent.

My last proposal in this section concerns capital transfer tax which, ever since its introduction by the Labour Government in 1974, has been a thorn in the side of those owning and running family businesses, and as such has had a damaging effect on risk taking and enterprise within a particularly important sector of the economy. In addition to statutory indexation of the threshold and rate bands, I propose this year to reform the tax radically.

In essence, the capital transfer tax is two taxes, as its two separate scales imply: an inheritance tax and a lifetime gifts tax. We have had an inheritance tax in some shape or form ever since Sir William Harcourt introduced his estate duty in 1894. But the lifetime gifts tax which the Labour Government introduced in 1974, in the teeth of united Conservative opposition, is an unwelcome and unwarranted impost. By deterring lifetime giving, it has had the effect of locking in assets, particularly the ownership of family businesses, often to the detriment of the businesses concerned.

Accordingly, I propose to abolish entirely the tax on lifetime gifts to individuals. As with the old estate duty, there will be a tapered charge on gifts made within seven years of death and provisions to charge gifts made with reservation; and the regime for trusts, which is needed as a protection for the death charge, will be kept broadly unchanged. The cost of abolishing the tax on lifetime giving will be £35 million in 1986-87 and £55 million in 1987-88.

In recognition of the radically changed nature of the tax, I have decided to rename it the inheritance tax. My two previous Budgets abolished three unnecessary taxes: the national insurance surcharge, the investment income surcharge and development land tax. The abolition of the tax on lifetime gifts adds a fourth.

SAVINGS AND INVESTMENT

I now turn to the taxation of savings and investment. In my 1984 Budget, I introduced a major reform of the taxation of savings and investment, designed to improve the direction and quality of both. Today I propose to carry this reform further forward. The Social Security Bill now before Parliament proposes important and far-reaching changes in pension provision, notably by encouraging the growth of personal pensions. Those changes—to which the Government attach the highest importance—have been warmly welcomed, both for the greater freedom they will give to existing pension scheme members and for the new scope they will offer to the millions of working people who are not in an occupational pension scheme.

In the light of these changes, I intend later this year to publish detailed proposals designed to give personal pensions the same favourable tax treatment as is currently enjoyed by retirement annuities. Publication of these proposals will enable there to be the widest possible consultation prior to legislation in next year's Finance Bill. Meanwhile, I can assure the House that, as I made clear last year, I have no plans to change that favourable tax treatment.

However, I do need to deal with the growing problem of the rules governing pension fund surpluses. The dramatic improvement in the financial climate compared with a decade ago, most notably as a result of the sharp fall in inflation, has seen a number of pension funds become heavily over-funded. This presents a double problem, both aspects of which the Inland Revenue is at present having to deal with through the exercise of its discretionary powers.

In the first place, excessive surpluses, even if they arise unintentionally, represent the misuse of a tax privilege which was intended to assist the provision of pensions, and for no other purpose. So the Inland Revenue requires from time to time that surpluses be diminished. However, at the same time, the Inland Revenue feels obliged to turn down many of the increasing number of requests from companies which, often for good reasons, wish to take refunds from their pension fund into the company itself.

The absence of clear rules on how surpluses should and may be dealt with, and the consequent reliance that has to be placed on the exercise by the Inland Revenue of its discretion, have created considerable uncertainty and have unnecessarily constrained trustees' freedom of action. Therefore, I propose to replace these discretionary arrangements with clear and objective statutory provisions.

In future, the amount of any surplus in a fund will be determined for tax purposes in accordance with published guidelines, based on a secure funding method and prudent actuarial assumptions, as advised by the Government Actuary. Where a surplus is 5 per cent. or less of total

liabilities, no action will need to be taken. Where it is higher than that, action will be required to eliminate the excess.

It will be entirely a matter for the trustees and employers to decide whether the reduction is to be achieved by increasing benefits, or by reducing contributions, or by making a refund to the company. If, and only if, they choose to make a refund, the employer will be liable to tax at a rate of 40 per cent. of the amount refunded, so as broadly to recover the tax relief previously given. The effect of these new arrangements is likely to be a yield of £20 million in 1986-87 and £120 million in 1987-88.

Next, stamp duty. I have no change to propose in the stamp duty on houses and other property, which I reduced to 1 per cent. with a higher threshold in my 1984 Budget, but there is a formidable case this year for a further reduction in the rate of stamp duty on share transfers. The City of London is the pre-eminent financial centre of Europe. The massive £6 billion it contributes to our invisible earnings is but one measure of the resulting benefit to the British economy.

Competition in financial services nowadays is not continental, but global. The City revolution now under way, due to culminate in the ending of fixed commissions, the so-called big bang, on 27 October, is essential if London is to compete successfully against New York and Tokyo. If London cannot win a major share of the global securities market, its present world pre-eminence in other financial services will be threatened. Successful competition depends on a number of factors, but one of the most important is the level of dealing costs. The abolition of fixed commissions will certainly help, but with no tax at all on share transactions in New York, and roughly ½ per cent. in Tokyo, under the existing tax regime London will still be vulnerable.

I therefore propose to reduce stamp duty on share transactions from 1 per cent. to ½ per cent. as from the date of the big bang. It is right that the full cost of this should be met from within the financial sector itself and accordingly, I propose to bring into tax at the new ½ per cent. rate a range of financial transactions which are at present entirely free of stamp duty. These include transactions in loan stock other than short bonds and gilt-edged securities, transactions unwound within a single stock exchange account, letters of allotment, the purchase by a company of its own shares, and takeovers and mergers. There will also be a special rate of 5 per cent. on the conversion of United Kingdom shares into ADRs and other forms of depositary receipt. Some of these changes, including the new ADR charge, will take effect immediately: others will be delayed until the big bang.

This further halving of the stamp duty on equities should enable London to compete successfully in the worldwide securities market, and it will also provide a further fillip to wider share ownership in the United Kingdom. Just as we have made Britain a nation of home owners so it is the long-term ambition of this Government to make the British people a nation of share owners, too; to create a popular capitalism in which more and more men and women have a direct personal stake in British business and industry. Through the rapid growth of employee share schemes, and through the outstandingly successful privatisation programme, much progress has been made —but not enough. Nor, I fear, will we ever achieve our goal as long as the tax system continues to discriminate so heavily in favour of institutional investment rather than direct share ownership.

Accordingly, I propose to introduce a radical new scheme to encourage direct investment in United Kingdom equities. Starting next January, any adult will be able to invest up to £200 a month, or £2,400 a year, in shares. These will be held in a special account which I am calling a personal equity plan. As long as the investment is kept in the plan for a relatively short minimum period of between one and two years, all reinvested dividends and all capital gains on disposals will be entirely free of tax. The longer the investment is kept in the plan, the more the tax relief will build up and the greater will be the benefits, and there will normally be no need for Inland Revenue to get involved at all.

Although the scheme will be open to everyone, it is specially designed to encourage smaller savers, and particularly those who may never previously have invested in equities in their lives. The plans will be simple and flexible to operate. Anyone who is legally able to deal in securities will be eligible to register as a plan manager, but the investor himself will own the shares and the rights that go with them, including voting rights. It will be for the investor to choose whether to make the investment decisions himself or to give the plan manager authority to act on his behalf. The cost of the scheme will be around £25 million in 1987-88, but will build up in later years as more plans are taken out.

This is a substantial, innovative and exciting new scheme. I am confident that, over time, it will bring about a dramatic extension of share ownership in Britain. Although wholly different in structure from the Loi Monory in France, I expect it to be every bit as successful in achieving its objective. I am sure the whole House will welcome this far-reaching package of measures to reform the taxation of savings and investment.

CHARITIES

I turn now to the tax treatment of charities and charitable giving. In almost every facet of the nation's affairs, it becomes increasingly clear that private action is more effective than state action. This is particularly well illustrated by the success of charitable organisations up and down the land in the fields of famine relief, social welfare, medicine, education, including the universities, the arts and the heritage.

The Government have already done a great deal to assist charities, both through the tax system and in other ways, but the time has come to take a further step forward. The first question is whether any further fiscal relief should be given to the charities themselves, through relief from VAT, or to the act of giving.

In the light of representations from the Charities VAT Reform Group, I am prepared this year, exceptionally, to make a number of specific concessions on the VAT front. I propose to relieve charities from VAT on their non-classified press advertising; on medicinal products where they are engaged in the treatment or care of people or animals, or in medical research; on lifts and distress alarm systems for the handicapped—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]—on refrigeration and video equipment for use in medical applications purchased by charities from donated funds; on all recording equipment for talking books and

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newspapers used by charities for the blind; and on welfare vehicles used by charities to transport the deaf, blind or mentally handicapped.

But in general, I am convinced that the right way to help charities is not by relieving the charities themselves from VAT, but by encouraging the act of charitable giving. I say this for two principal reasons. First, it is clearly better that the amount of tax relief is related to the amount of support a charity is able to attract, rather than to the value of goods and services it happens to purchase. Secondly, whereas a pound of VAT relief is worth precisely that, a pound of tax relief on giving is likely to generate more than a pound of income going to charity.

My principal proposals therefore relate directly to the act of giving to charity. First, I propose to abolish altogether the upper limit on relief at the higher rates of income tax on charitable covenants. At the same time, I propose to act to stop the abuse of the tax system by ensuring that tax relief goes only to money which is used for charitable purposes.

Next companies. It is widely believed that corporate giving to charity would be more generous than it is at present if tax relief did not depend on the company entering into a four-year covenant. Accordingly, I propose to allow public companies to enjoy tax relief on one-off gifts to charity up to a maximum of 3 per cent. of the company's annual dividend payment to its shareholders. There will, of course, continue to be no limit on the amount a company can covenant to charity.

Many charities, however, have made clear to me their fear that to introduce a similar relief for one-off donations by individuals would weaken them by reducing the stability they enjoy as a result of the binding force of covenants. Instead, therefore, I propose to encourage individual giving to charity by a different means, that of tax relief for payroll giving. From April 1987 it will be open to any employer to set up a scheme under which employees can have charitable donations of up to £100 a year deducted from their pay, and get tax relief on them.

All in all, the proposals I have announced today add up to a very substantial package of assistance to charities and charitable giving. Their cost to the Exchequer will depend on how generously companies and employees respond to this initiative, but my best estimate is that it could amount to as much as £70 million in 1987-88. This will be partly paid for by the measures to curb abuse, which may save some £20 million a year. I hope that the additional charitable giving these concessions stimulate will be at least twice the amount of the extra tax relief given.

TAXES ON SPENDING

I now turn to the taxation of spending. So far as the indirect taxes are concerned, the overriding question this year is how far I should recover from the oil consumer the tax revenues I have lost from the oil producer, as a result of the massive fall in the oil price. Since November the price of petrol at the pump has fallen by anything up to 15p a gallon, but if the oil companies had passed on the full amount of the fall in the oil price to date, the price of petrol at the pump could have been 12p a gallon lower still. There is clearly scope, therefore, for a sizeable increase in petrol tax this year.

I have concluded, however, that at the present time, while I must certainly maintain the real value of the revenue I get from the motorist, I will not increase it. But I do believe it makes sense to look again, in the light of the radically changed circumstances, at the relative weight of petrol tax and vehicle excise duty. Accordingly, I propose to increase the duty on petrol by an amount which, including VAT, would—if it were wholly passed on to the consumer—[HON. MEMBERS: "And it will be"]—raise the price at the pump by 7½p a gallon. *[Laughter.]* This is 2p more than is needed to keep pace with inflation, and that 2p enables me to keep vehicle excise duty at last year's level of £100 for cars and light vans, leaving the overall burden on the motorist unchanged in real terms. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Moreover, given the very substantial increase in the oil companies' margins, there is clearly no need for the pump price of petrol to go up at all. Indeed, it ought to fall further. In the same way, I propose to increase the duty on derv by an amount which—if it were wholly passed on to the consumer, which, to repeat, it should certainly not be—would raise the price at the pump by 6½p, including VAT. This will enable me to avoid any general increase this year in the vehicle excise duty on lorries, too.

So far as the other oil duties are concerned, I have one or two changes to make—not to the duty on heavy fuel oil, which will remain unchanged as it has done since 1980, but I propose to increase the very modest duty on gasoil, by 1½p a gallon, and I propose to abolish altogether the duties on aviation kerosene, or Avtur—which at present is taxed for domestic flights only—and on most lubricating oils. All these changes in duty will take effect from 6 o'clock this evening.

Finally, so far as oil products are concerned, I am anxious to do what I reasonably can to assist the introduction of lead-free petrol. The case for this on environmental grounds is clear. I have therefore decided to create a duty differential in its favour to offset its higher production costs. My officials will be discussing with the oil companies how this can best be achieved in time for next year's Budget.

Next, tobacco. In the light of the representations that I have received on health grounds, I have decided to increase the duty on cigarettes by appreciably more than is needed to keep pace with inflation. I therefore propose an increase in the duty on cigarettes and hand-rolling tobacco by the equivalent, including VAT, of approximately 11p on a packet of 20 cigarettes. This will take effect from midnight on Thursday. As last year, I propose no increase at all on the duties on cigars and pipe tobacco, which are more heavily taxed here than in most comparable countries.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Absolutely right.

Mr. Lawson: Next, drink. As the House will recall, I was obliged in 1984 to increase the duty on beer by slightly more than I would have wished, as a consequence of the judgment against the United Kingdom in the European Court. I now propose no increase at all in the duty on beer. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear,"] Nor do I propose any increase in the duties on cider, table wine, sparkling wine, fortified wine or spirits. This last decision will, I hope, be particularly welcome in Scotland.

Finally, VAT, I propose to stop the misuse of long-stay relief for hotel accommodation, and make certain other minor changes, but I have no proposals for major changes in value added tax this year.

The changes I have announced in the excise duties will, all told, raise an extra £795 million in 1986-87, the same amount as I would have raised had I simply increased all the excise duties precisely in line with inflation. The overall impact effect on the RPI, if all the increases were fully passed on, would be one half of one per cent. This has already been taken into account in the forecast I have given the House of 3½ per cent. inflation by the end of the year.

INCOME TAX

Finally, I turn to income tax. In my Budget speech last year I undertook to issue a Green Paper on the reform of personal taxation. As the House is aware, I am publishing the Green Paper today. It discusses a range of options which will in due course be opened up by the computerisation of PAYE, from the relationship between income tax and employees' national insurance contributions to the closer integration of the tax and benefit systems.

In particular, however, it outlines a possible reform of the present system of personal allowances. The responses to my predecessor's 1980 Green Paper revealed widespread dissatisfaction with the existing arrangements, but—perhaps inevitably—no clear consensus as to what should replace them.

Married women increasingly resent the fact that a wife's income is treated for tax purposes as that of her husband, depriving her of the independence and privacy she has a right to expect. There is growing complaint, too, of the way in which, in a number of respects, the present system penalises marriage itself, and it cannot be right that the tax system should come down hardest on a married couple just at the time when the wife stops work to start a family. Yet that is what happens today.

The alternative system set out in the Green paper, of independent taxation with allowances tranferable between husband and wife, would remedy all these defects. To be acceptable, however, it would need to be accompanied by a substantial increase in the basic tax threshold.

The Government are committed to reducing the burden of income tax, and the proposal in the Green Paper suggests one way of doing that which would achieve a number of other worthwhile objectives—including the ability to take more people out of the unemployment and poverty traps for a given amount of tax relief than is possible under the present tax system. Given the timetable of computerisation, none of this could in practice be implemented until the 1990s, but we need to start planning for the 1990s today. The Government will therefore carefully consider the responses to today's Green Paper before taking any decision on how to proceed.

Meanwhile, I have to set the tax rates and thresholds for the coming year, but first I have two minor proposals to announce, both of which I hope the House will welcome. First, pensions paid by the German and Austrian Governments to victims of Nazi persecution are free of tax in both Germany and Austria. In this country, however, the tax relief on such pensions is set at 50 per cent. In future, I propose that pensions paid to victims of Nazi persecution should be free of tax altogether.

Secondly, the House will be aware that, as from next year, social security benefit upratings will be moved to April, to coincide with the tax year. This will enable them to be fully taken into account before PAYE codes are issued for 1987-88. However, to bridge the gap between the November 1985 and April 1987 upratings, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services proposes to have a special transitional uprating in July, the details of which he has recently announced. But, as hon. Members will know from their postbags, it could be confusing for many old-age pensioners and widows to undergo a special mid-year tax recoding on account of the July uprating. I have therefore decided that for pensioners and widows the benefit increases payable in July will be exempt from income tax in 1986-87. The cost of this will be £15 million.

Since we first took office in 1979 we have cut the basic rate of income tax from 33 per cent. to 30 per cent. and sharply reduced the penal higher rates we inherited from Labour. We have increased the main tax thresholds by some 20 pr cent. more than inflation—and the greater part of that 20 per cent. has been achieved during the present Parliament.

It is a good record, but it is not good enough. The burden of income tax is still too great. Nothing could be further from the truth than the claim that we have a choice between cutting tax and cutting unemployment, for the two go hand in hand. It is no accident that the two most successful economies in the world, both overall and specifically in terms of job creation—those of the United States and Japan—have the lowest level of tax as a proportion of GDP. Reductions in taxation motivate new businesses and improve incentives at work. They are a principal engine of the enterprise culture, on which our future prosperity and employment opportunities depend.

The case for higher tax thresholds is well understood. In my two previous Budgets I have raised the married man's allowance to its highest level in real terms since the war, higher as a proportion of average earnings than in either Germany or the United States. But we should not overlook the need for reductions in the basic rate of tax too. The basic rate is the starting rate of tax and it is the crucially important marginal rate of tax for some 95 per cent. of all employees and 90 per cent. of all self-employed and unincorporated businesses.

Clearly, given the massive fall in oil revenues, this is not a year for substantial reductions in tax of any kind, but, provided the economy continues to grow as it has been growing, and provided we continue to maintain firm control of public expenditure, the scope should be there in the years ahead.

Meanwhile I propose for 1986-87 to raise all the main thresholds and allowances by the statutory indexation figure of 5·7 per cent. rounded up. The single person's allowance will therefore rise by £130 to £2,335 and the married man's allowance by £200 to £3,655. Similarly, the single age allowance will rise by £160 to £2,850 and the married age allowance by £250 to £4,505. The age allowance income limit becomes £9,400. I propose to raise all the higher-rate thresholds by exactly £1,000. This is fully in line with statutory indexation for the first—40 per cent. — higher rate, but less than half statutory indexation for the top—60 per cent.—rate.

Given the need for caution in the light of current circumstances, I do not have scope this year for a reduction in the basic rate of income tax beyond one penny in the pound. But this reduction from 30 per cent. to 29 per cent. still represents the first cut in the basic rate of income tax

[Mr. Lawson]

since my predecessor took it down from 33 per cent. to 30 per cent. in 1979. So long as this Government remain in office, it will not be the last.

There will, of course, be a consequential reduction in the rate of advance corporation tax, and I also propose a corresponding cut in the small companies' rate of corporation tax from 30 per cent. to 29 per cent.

The combined effect of the various income tax changes I have just announced is to concentrate the benefit, modest as I readily concede it to be, not on the rich but on the great majority of ordinary taxpayers. As a result of the adjustments I have made to the higher-rate thresholds, the gain for those at the top of the income scale is more or less confined to what they would have received under simple indexation alone. By contrast, the married man on average earnings will be some £2·60 a week better off, an improvement of £1·45 a week over simple indexation alone.

The income tax changes I have announced today will take effect under PAYE on the first pay day after 17 May. They will cost £935 million in 1986-87 over and above the cost of statutory indexation.

Seven years ago, when my predecessor cut the basic rate of income tax from 33 per cent. to 30 per cent. he added:

> "Our long-term aim should surely be to reduce the basic rate of income tax to no more than 25 per cent." [*Official Report*, 12 June 1979; Vol. 968, c. 261.]

I share that aim.

CONCLUSION

In this Budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have reaffirmed the prudent policies that have brought us three successive years of steady growth with low inflation and the prospect of a fourth ahead of us. I have described how we can take in our stride the dramatic collapse in the oil price, and benefit from its consequences.

In collaboration with my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, I have announced a further substantial range of measures to help the unemployed. I have proposed a radical and far-reaching new scheme for tax-free investment in equities, so that we may truly become a share-owning democracy, and I have abolished a fourth tax. I have announced the most substantial package of assistance to charitable giving ever, and cut the basic rate of income tax.

Building as it does on the achievements of the recent past, this Budget is a safeguard for the present and a springboard for the future. I commend it to the House.

PROVISIONAL COLLECTION OF TAXES

Motion made, and Question,

That, pursuant to section 5 of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968, provisional statutory effect shall be given to the following Motions:—

(a) Tobacco products (Motion No. 2);

(b) Hydrocarbon oil (Motion No. 3);

(c) Vehicles excise duty (hackney carriages and farmers' goods vehicles) (Motion No. 4).—[Mr. Lawson.]

put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means Motions), and agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I shall now call on the Chancellor of the Exchequer to move the motion entitled "Amendment of the Law". It is on that motion that the Budget debate will take place today and on succeeding days. The remaining motions will not be put until the end of the Budget debate next week and they will then be decided without debate.

Budget Resolutions and Economic Situation

AMENDMENT OF THE LAW

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the national Debt and public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply;

(b) for refunding any amount of tax;

(c) for varying the rate of that tax otherwise than in relation to all supplies and importations; or

(d) for any relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description. — *[Mr. Lawson.]*

Relevant documents: European Community Document No. 9792/85, Annual Economic Report 1985-86 and the unnumbered document, Annual Economic Report 1985-86 (final version as adopted by the Council).

4.51 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I shall observe the convention with the usual relish and congratulate the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the way in which he delivered his speech. This year he did not quite break his own record of one hour and 14 minutes, but it certainly assisted us to have such a clear and crisp delivery, which took such a short time.

Congratulations are especially in order because the Budget was plainly not the Budget which the Chancellor of the Exchequer thought he could introduce this year. Indeed, it was not the Budget which he wanted to introduce this year. Last year, both at Budget time and at the Conservative party conference, he looked forward to tax cuts. It is obvious that this year's Budget was to have been a bribes Budget, which would begin to make tax cuts with the next general election in mind. Instead, the fall in oil prices and the consequent fall in oil revenues has made it into a bits and pieces Budget. It is a Budget which contains promises of there being some scope next year. It is jam tomorrow from a Chancellor of the Exchequer who is plainly in a jam today.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer will have noticed from the Opposition's response that we sincerely welcome some aspects of the Budget. I think, for example, of the provisions relating to the business expansion scheme both in its continuation and its exclusions, which appear to be sensible and helpful. In addition, the provision to relieve victims of Nazism from tax obligations on their pensions is obviously just and will command unanimous support. The concessions favouring charities are equally welcome, although I hope, as the Chancellor implied, that they will be judiciously monitored, as it would be wrong for any suspect bodies to benefit from them.

I echo, and I hope reinforce, the view expressed by the Chancellor that, as a result of his approach, we can ensure that petrol prices at least stay the same. Indeed, they should fall, given the benefits that have accrued to oil companies.

Other matters, including the Green Paper, will need close scrutiny. If the Green Paper's proposals were to result in any disadvantage to married women, or were to act as a deterrent to women considering paid work, the Chancellor could expect to meet hostility both inside and outside the House.

Naturally, other aspects of the Budget can be criticised. One which stands out is the abolition of the gift tax, which is literally a handout to the rich. Following the tradition of the House I propose to leave such detailed considerations to other hon. Members to discuss, but there is one point that I wish to make, because it represents a fundamental cause for concern.

The Budget should have been particularly distinctive as it is the first Budget of the post-oil boom era. For that reason, it is endowed with a particular and historic importance. Although the Chancellor of the Exchequer is conscious of the loss of resources, and presumably of the impact of that on our economy, he has chosen to do nothing that will effectively promote the building and rebuilding of our manufacturing economy, and to do nothing to help systematically to provide our country with the modern means of making a living in the future. Such provision for training, research, design and development, and for new machines, should have been made in all the Budgets since 1979, and this year they should have been not an ingredient but a primary feature. After all, we find ourselves in difficult times with revenues falling.

The promotion of the redevelopment and regeneration of our economy is not central to this year's Budget, and that makes it a sideshow Budget, and an exercise in taxation juggling that is irrelevant to the main problems of employment and development which face our people and our businesses. The loss of industry during the past six and a half years, and the loss of revenue now facing us, should have made such considerations a primary concern of the Budget, together with compensation for those losses.

Such failures are not the only matters of concern or the only areas in which the Chancellor has sadly failed to make the necessary responses. We must be grateful for the fact that he did not describe his puny package as yet another "Budget for jobs". I suppose that he has learnt from his experience of last year. He then gave it that grandiose title, but the result was that in the first six months after that Budget there was a net increase in employment of 4,000 people—4,000 people in an economy with 3·4 million registered unemployed, and in a year in which total unemployment rose again by more than 70,000. Thus, we cannot be expected to cheer over the addition of 55,000 people to the community programme or over the fact that the wage has been increased by £2 to the princely sum of £67 a week.

The expansion of the job clubs for advice is more of a taunt than a support for the unemployed. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, who must be acquainted with the facts, must know that people will regard that as nothing more than an additional opportunity to have a chat and a cup of tea. In some ways, that is an advantage in itself, because unemployment can be an extremely lonely condition, but that is about as far as it goes, and the right hon. Gentleman knows that well.

During the past six and a half years, poverty has increased significantly. Double the number of families are on supplementary benefit, and an additional 2 million people are so poor that they must depend on supplementary benefit. The Budget said nothing and offered absolutely nothing to the poor. I did not expect that it would, coming from a Government who are weakening wages councils, and who during the next 12 months will make provision to ensure that the old-age pension is worth 3 per cent. less at this time next year than it is now. I could not expect a full-hearted commitment to combating poverty from such

[Mr. Neil Kinnock]

a Chancellor. With regard to the 1p reduction in the basic rate of tax, the Chancellor has only to reduce the basic rate by a further 5p to bring taxation down to the level of the 1979 burden.

The same faint-heartedness with which the Chancellor tries to wage war on poverty characterises his approach to the City. During the past six and a half years the institutions and individuals there have benefited stupendously from a variety of Government measures, yet what is to be obtained from them? The answer is nothing more than a sum equivalent to the amount lost to the Exchequer by halving stamp duty—£200 million—at a time when they are doing more than well, and when their conditions and rewards are arousing criticism in the Conservative party and from commentators who are usually slavish in their support for the Chancellor's general strategy. The Chancellor should have taken this chance to ensure that those people on high salaries with high returns pay their way as members of our society.

In all those areas—poverty, jobs and the approach to the City and those who now enjoy positions of great wealth —the Chancellor has seen the need for action, as we know from the way in which he touched on them, but he has backed off from acting effectively. That makes it the fudge-it Budget of a Government who during the past seven years have worn away the industrial base of the nation and wasted huge sums of wealth in a rake's progress financed by oil revenues. The Government have taxed ordinary people more than any other Government in history. They have borrowed more than any other Government in history. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Yes. The Government have borrowed £60 billion in five years, compared with the Labour Government, of whom the Chancellor was so critical, who borrowed £40 billion.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): When the right hon. Gentleman quotes those figures, will he bear in mind that this Government at least borrowed from the British, whereas the Labour Government borrowed from abroad in foreign currencies?

Mr. Kinnock: Yes, and as Mr. Tim Congdon has reminded us, as a consequence of that borrowing the Government's repayments of interest are running at £19·5 billion, compared with the total of £8 billion which the Labour Government had to pay to an assortment of people during their last period of office. I hope that the hon. Gentleman's patriotism will extend to other areas, especially to sell-offs — the way in which the Government have been raising funds to finance their programme.

The Government have been raising funds by once-and-for-all sales of assets that have been built up for generations by British taxpayers. The sum is exhaustible, and that is a ruinous way to proceed. The Government have had the unprecedented and unrepeatable bonus of £55 billion-worth of revenues from North sea oil. No other Government have ever enjoyed such revenues, and no British Government have ever so wilfully squandered such wealth.

For years the Government have been told in Budget debates, and at many other times, by us and by others that they should use that windfall deliberately and prudently to modernise and restructure British manufacturing industry. They were provided with a glorious opportunity to do that, sheltered as they were from balance of payments pressures, which have affected every Government in the decades before they came to office with the asset of oil. They did not take advantage of that. Instead, they have used the resources and revenues to pay part of the bill for unemployment, to make tax concessions to the richest and to send abroad funds that have come in handy for our competitors to finance the advance of their industries. The Government have blown our oil wealth completely and have next to nothing to show for it. Indeed, in some respects they have less than nothing.

Manufacturing investment is still nearly 20 per cent. lower than it was in 1979. Manufacturing output is still lower than it was in 1979. During the Government's seven years the healthy surplus in manufactured trade which they inherited has been turned to a deficit of £3 billion this year, having gone into deficit for the first time in modern British history in 1983. Only the Prime Minister's dwindling palace guard believes that that gap can start to be made up by the sale of services. Certainly the British Invisible Exports Council and an assortment of others who make their living in that sphere know that the gap cannot be made up by the sale of services.

In addition to the failure to sustain manufactured output, investment and trade, we have also seen a massive loss of employment. At present 3·4 million people are registered unemployed, and more people have been unemployed for a year than the total number of unemployed when the Government took office in 1979.

These seven years have been the wasted years, the locust years, and the years which on Saturday the Prime Minister with unconscious and untypical accuracy described as the years of excavation. How right she was. During these severn years great holes have been dug which not only have undermined the structure of our society, but, even more painfully and damagingly, have undermined the self-confidence of millions of people. Now, throughout the country young men and women aged 20 to 22 ask, without the merest hint of self-pity or affectation, "Do you think I will ever get a job?"

I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have encountered such young people, as I have. I am sure that Tory Members have also done so. I wonder what Ministers say when they are addressed in that fashion. Do they dismiss the questioners as grumblers, as the Prime Minister did on Saturday? Do they say, as she did, "We have had only six years and nine months and we are only just beginning."? Six years and nine months ago, the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe), began the Conservative party's period of office with his first Budget, which he described as the Budget for a new beginning. It is six years and nine months from beginning to beginning. That is the story of the Government, yet they continue to say that there is no alternative.

Hardly anyone believes the Government now. Conservative Members, and members of the Cabinet, do not believe that there is no alternative. Some actually want to be the alternative. The Confederation of British Industry does not believe it, the TUC does not believe it, the Select Committee of Employment of this House does not believe it, the Select Committee on Overseas Trade of the other place does not believe it.

I have a list of people who in different degrees have repeatedly endorsed the proposition that there is a serious and constructive alternative, which consists of bringing

about a major increase in spending. There is only one thing more expensive than spending, and that is not spending, paying the bills of idleness that go with that, and in particular not spending on our young people, on training, on new technology and on research. These costs will be paid generation in and generation out, apart from the costs that are run up in our society in despair, division and decay. The Prime Minister is almost alone in her belief that the difficulties besetting our society are disconnected from the economic woes inflicted upon our society. Nobody else seriously believes that.

Apart from a commitment to development, to building, to employment, and to construction, it is also obviously necessary, as it has been throughout the years of oil revenue, for money to be expended on renovating our industrial base. That suggestion has come from many quarters, as has the proposition that in both the private and public sectors of manufacturing and services, priority must be given to investment, so that the boost in employment and enterprise is not dissipated in the consumption of imports, or in handouts, which are absorbed in the short term.

There must be strategic answers to the strategic problems which beset our economy. None of those answers has been forthcoming in this Budget. Any prudent and responsible Government would have geared their monetary and fiscal policy to the development of the manufacturing base as an essential bedrock of their economic policy, and a resource for future growth and our standard of living. They would be fighting unemployment as an economic and social evil, instead of using unemployment as an economic and social weapon.

This Government are neither prudent nor responsible. They are prodigal in their waste of resources, and reckless in their attitude to the future of our country. Yet again, this Budget shows that they will not change any of their wasteful ways. This time, that failure to change is even worse. They have been given a clear warning of what life will be like without oil revenues. They have failed to make any effective or constructive response to the reality that faces them and everybody else. That is the dereliction of duty, and that is running away from the problem, and we shall punish that desertion of duty by defeating them at the next general election.

5.16 pm

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): I have seen a lot of Budgets in the time I have been in this House. I suppose they have been in various categories. Of some Budgets we expect much and get little. With some we anticipate the worst, and get it. In other Budgets, in not expecting much, we are then surprised by the result. This Budget is surprising in its variety, and surprising because almost everything predicted has not been done, and things that we did not expect have happened. I thought the Chancellor put the Budget in its correct context when he said that it was one of swings and roundabouts.

The Budget has done a number of things which must please many people outside of this House, and certainly pleases hon. Members on the Government side of the House, even if it does not please some on the other side. I always feel rather sorry that the Leader of the Opposition has to come straight in with an instant judgment, and answer a Chancellor who has been thoroughly briefed before he rises to speak. I thought that the Leader of the Opposition today criticised across the board rather more heavily than was justified.

The story that the Chancellor had to tell at the beginning of his speech was one of success. Considering that we are losing next year £5 billion in oil revenue, I felt that the outturn in terms of tax reduction possibility was surprisingly good.

Like many of my hon. Friends and people in the country, I believe that when we come to fight the next general election, the greatest issue will be not whether people have had reductions in tax, but whether we have reduced unemployment—I would say below 3 million. It will take quite a stimulus to reduce unemployment below that figure.

If I had one disappointment today, it was not that the Budget lacked stimulus, for the measures are there to provide such a stimulus. However, the amount of money that has been allocated to the stimulus was rather less than I would have hoped for.

My right hon. Friend would expect me to say that I was delighted that there was an increase in money given to the community programme. That is good for helping the long-term unemployed. The long-term unemployed figure is now very serious. The amount of money that is to be spent on the community programme — and other similar programmes; I think I have got the figure right from my right hon. Friend—is only £198 million.

This includes what has been provided to employers to give work to people aged between 18 and 20. This new incentive to employers is helpful to those who have been on the youth training programme. Many people justifiably ask, "If the young are trained on a youth training programme, "Trained for what?" the most important factor is that when they come out of that programme that they will get jobs. This 18-to-20 proposal, to encourage employers to take on more youngsters when they come out of training, is good. The question is, is it enough?

We are told that reducing unemployment is not entirely in the hands of Government. I agree with that. Nevertheless, the Government can do a great deal, particularly on an occasion such as this, when the Chancellor is determining his financial policy for the year ahead. Here is a chance to stimulate the creation of new jobs. It is a mistake to think that Government cannot create jobs. They can help to lose jobs, although the Government are not doing that. They are trying to get industry right; they are making an effort to encourage the creating of jobs. However, if the Budget is short on anything, it is short on actually providing new employment.

Recently, I listened to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister make the point that in the United States of America, Germany and other countries of the West with capitalist societies, unemployment had been reduced without the Government spending a great deal of money. That is to misread the situation. In America, the national budget and the states' budgets — I have figures into which I shall not go now — show that the Americans spend an enormous amount on the arms and space programmes and the individual states spend large sums on their social programmes, all of which employ many, many people.

I have not looked at the Budget figures yet, so I do not know what the contingency fund for next year is to be. I believe that in that fund there may be scope for the Government, in the next 12 months, to spend more money

[Sir Kenneth Lewis]

on providing extra jobs. I hope that they will do that. If there is money in the contingency fund, it should be reduced to good advantage, and that means reducing the dole queues.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): My hon. Friend is developing an interesting and positive argument. Is he aware that in the United States, where a great many new projects are Government-led, if not necessarily Government-funded, this has been done in a big way, creating millions of extra jobs, and it has been done without creating a high level of inflation, which is so damaging to the longer-term sound economy of any country?

Sir Kenneth Lewis: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the position in the United States, which also applies to a considerable extent in Germany.

I do not know how large the contingency fund is. I hope that it is as large as or larger than it was last year. If it is, I hope that the money that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has in his back pocket will be well used.

There is another matter. Although it is commendable from his point of view that my right hon. Friend has been able to keep his borrowing requirement at £7 billion, the same as last year, could we not really afford to have the borrowing requirement go up by another £1 billion? It represents only a small percentage—I believe that it is now less than 2 per cent. — of our gross national product, and we could allow that to slip a bit during the next 12 months.

Although there is much to be said for a large part of the Budget, and there is much that I like about it, there is still missing that element of concentration on getting jobs. I was surprised that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor cut the standard rate of tax as against putting up thresholds to take more people out of tax. We are always saying that there should be an incentive for people to take work, but there is an adverse effect when people can pick up as much on social security and benefits as they can through earnings.

In many parts of the country there are low earnings which are not comparable to those of London and other more prosperous areas. An example is my area. When those who are on low pay see what they can get on social security, rent rebates and the like and then look at the tax deductible from possible wages, is it surprising that too many shy away from work.

I am in favour of bringing down the standard rate of income tax, if we can do both that and raise thresholds, but this year we cannot. Therefore, on balance, to give 1p off the standard rate of income tax is too expensive for what it will achieve. In two or three months' time, nobody will see any difference between paying 30p in the pound and 29p in the pound. If my right hon. Friend the Chancellor had been able to bring down the rate by 3p in the pound, that would have been a reasonable option. Clearly, he could not do that. Obviously my right hon. Friend's judgment is not mine on this matter. Next year, if he wants to make an effective reduction in the standard rate, he will have to bring it down by three points. Will he be able to afford it? This year the 1p reduction is too small to be of any relevance to any whom it affects.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): My right hon. Friend raised the threshold by 5·7 per cent.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: My right hon. Friend raised the threshold by only just the rate of inflation, when he could have raised it by double the rate of inflation and not taken 1p off the standard rate. I am not making a great complaint. It was just a matter of judgment. My right hon. Friend's judgment is that it is better to reduce the standard rate, and my judgment is in a different direction.

Dr. Glyn: My hon. Friend is making a strong argument. Does he agree that if extra money was, as he suggested, used to raise thresholds, it would have a greater effect in inducing people to take jobs?

Sir Kenneth Lewis: This is the point that I have been trying to make.

Many of us, for many years, have wanted wider share ownership. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on creating such a scheme, and I hope that it will gather momentum over the years. We need an enlightened capitalism in which people on the shop floor have an interest not only in the company in which they work, but in others. At the moment, they all have an interest in companies through their pension funds, but they do not realise it. It is better that they should understand that having a personal stake in industry is good for industry, good for them and good for the country as a whole.

The Budget has potential. I know that in the past few years we have not had a second Budget, but in the time that I have been in the House, Chancellors have regularly had second Budgets, and some have even had a third. Perhaps, as we get towards the end of the year, if the price of oil stabilises and more money comes in from North sea oil, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will feel that he can do what I have suggested, and spend more through creative stimulus.

The old phrase "priming the pump" is not dead, though it may be forgotten. It is important that any Government facing rising unemployment should decide how they can spend money to prime the pump and allow people who feel useless on the unemployment list to get back to work, because there is plenty to do. It is there through the construction industry in housing and other areas. There is plenty of scope for work that does not bring in imports and I want to see the Government spending more on that. I believe that the Budget is very good in parts, but I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will take heed of the need during the year, for building on some very good initiatives, already taken, actually to provide more jobs.

5.29 pm

Mr. Richard Wainwright (Colne Valley): Like many other hon. Members, I followed with great agreement the polite but firmly critical approach to the Budget adopted by the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Sir K. Lewis), and the similar interventions made by his hon. Friends the Members for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) and for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn).

In 20 years I cannot recall the first speech from the Government Benches after the Chancellor had sat down being so critical. That, of course, matched the noticeably subdued atmosphere in which the Chancellor was received at the end of his speech. As many Tory Members will quietly recognise, today's Budget speech was little more than the elegant performance of a busker to a crowd of long-suffering taxpayers and the unemployed, who have now been told that the real show will not open until March

1987. Although the busking had some of the sparkle that we associate with the Chancellor of the Exchequer—thank goodness for that—it was, on the whole, deplorably complacent.

We are accustomed, in the cut and thrust of politics, to other Ministers producing these phoney figures for British recovery, which we all know are derived from the shockingly low base to which the British economy and British manufacturing descended in 1980, and to the fact that we went into deep recession nearly two years before the other industrial powers. We are used to that kind of sleight-of-hand from other Ministers, but it is a bit much for the Chancellor himself on Budget day to indulge in such phoney statistics, and that feeling will be shared by the commentators and most hon. Members. Manufacturing output has not yet recovered to its 1979 level, and those who are neglected and unrepresented in the Cabinet, who live between the Trent and the Tweed, and west of Reading, are painfully aware of that.

There was also complacency in the Chancellor's admission. After making an excessively robust and over-optimistic assumption about oil prices in last year's Budget, he came forward with only one scenario, based on the single opitimistic assumption of an average price of $15 a barrel in the coming year. Let us hope that he is right, but it would have been prudent for the Chancellor to produce also an alternative scenario with the price at about $9 a barrel. In the meantime, he is pushing his luck.

The Chancellor made a great point about the buoyancy of the other direct tax revenues—corporation tax and income tax. Only a few minutes before he boasted of that buoyancy he was deploring—with a great deal of right on his side—the runaway rise of our earnings to a level far above that of our competitors, because the Government pretend to have nothing to do with an incomes policy. The buoyancy of the revenue is a direct consequence of those runaway earnings. Far from welcoming that, the Chancellor should be seriously perturbed that the position is as buoyant as it is. The buoyancy of corporation tax must be a reflection of the poor level of capital investment by industry, which is not claiming the final year's capital allowances to the extent that one would have seen if manufacturing were in a healthy condition.

As always, the centrepiece of the Chancellor's Budget is that absurd totem of the public sector borrowing requirement, which is not even a measure of the true Government deficit and is now an object of idol worship by people who cannot admit how wrong they have been. There is no need for the public sector borrowing requirement to be confined to such a low figure, except, of course, for the fact that the Chancellor is not prepared to admit that he has changed his mind.

The world is anxious to lend Britain money. Other countries see Britain as a safe country in an unstable world, which has an established monarchy, a healthy three-party system, and which is approaching the liberating event of a general election which may restore sanity to British government. There would be no difficulty in raising money. However, the Chancellor is not prepared to be converted to common-sense economics.

The saddest feature of the Chancellor's speech was the absence of the adventurous monetarist who, if he had been true to form, would at least have wheeled in a new monetary aggregate. I was expecting the Chancellor, the old confident Chancellor, to produce M2 and to command us to worship at that new shrine. However, so weary is he of the struggle that, blow me, he simply brought back from retirement that miserable, old, failed harridan, M3. He has now said that the upper limit of M3 can be 15 per cent.

The Chancellor is telling us in one breath, as a monetarist, that inflation will come down to a rate of 3·5 per cent., but that the monetary aggregate will rise by up to 15 per cent. That is the final confession of this faltering old doctrine in which no one any longer places any faith.

The distressing part of the Chancellor's recital was his almost contemptuous neglect of the unemployed. What use is it to tell the unemployed that the basic rate of income tax has been reduced from 30 to 29 per cent.? Who has the cheek to tell the unemployed that they can now invest up to £200 a month in a special personal equity plan? What is the use of telling the unemployed that their gifts to others will no longer suffer capital transfer tax?

The Government in this Budget have done nothing worth talking about for the unemployed. The increase in the community programme is small. It should at least have been doubled, and could perfectly well have been. In particular, the biggest gap in the Budget in my opinion—which the House will hear about from the two official spokesmen from the alliance parties during the debates—is the total failure of the Government to do anything about national insurance. They have done nothing about national insurance—the tax on jobs—which reaches a level of 19·45 per cent. in the pound. That tax has remained untouched. What could be a bigger snub to the unemployed than to tell them that the tax on people who want to take them on will remain wholly unchanged? In the alliance's view, there should have been a cut of at least 10 per cent. on all the rates of national insurance contributions as a starting point to eventually getting rid of the tax on jobs.

While I am on this point, I should like to mention that, in order to help the unemployed and to finance community programme schemes and our national assets, there is one step which the Chancellor could easily have taken in the name of common justice. That is the reversal of the crazy situation that has come about under his chancellorship, whereby income from mere investment is taxed substantially less than income from the sweat of one's brow or from the exertion of one's brain in employment.

An employed person pays income tax of 38 per cent.—29 per cent. in so-called income tax, and 9 per cent. in the alternative income tax, known as national insurance. A person who sits back and waits for his dividend to come in pays tax of only 29 per cent. That is a complete reversal of the historic fiscal position whereby unearned income was always taxed more heavily than earned income.

There may be a theoretical case for saying that unearned income and earned income should be taxed at the same rate. I do not necessarily dispute that. However, it is surely unjustifiable to reverse the position so that income from work is more heavily penalised than income from investments.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will the hon. Gentleman concede that, to a great extent, much of the unearned income to which he has referred disparagingly is money saved by people while at work? Therefore, why should that income be taxed at a higher rate? Why should it include the national insurance element, which exists to pay for certain services and facilities which the individual expects from the state?

Mr. Wainwright: Not for the first time, the hon. Gentleman has made an elegant introduction to a point I was about to make — that there must be a reasonable threshold below which income from savings is relatively modestly taxed. Whether the threshold should be £4,000 or £5,000 a year for retired people is a matter for discussion. I accept that income from money saved for retirement should be lightly taxed. The age allowance should certainly be more generous. I was speaking, as I suspect the hon. Member for Macclesfield well knew, of the large investment incomes, of which there are an increasing number, and which are augmented in the City of London at a tremendous rate every working day of the week. People with such unearned incomes should certainly pay more, not less, than wage earners.

The tax threshold remains disgracefully low. It is appalling that some people who are in receipt of only the state pension are assessed to pay income tax because the Chancellor has refused to lift the threshold in a civilised way.

Emphasis has been placed on expanding the experimental job start system from the present nine pilot areas. An employee is paid £20 a week by the state for taking a job in which he will receive £80 or less a week from the boss. That is a subsidy to the employee to persuade him or her to take a low-paid job.

We may judge the effect of extending the scheme to the whole country by looking at what has happened in one of the nine pilot areas — Huddersfield, part of which I represent. Only nine people in Huddersfield have entered the job start scheme since it was inaugurated early this year, due to the efforts of 10 extra staff plugging the scheme. If one extrapolates the numbers involved in the Huddersfield pilot scheme and applies them nationwide —I wish that we could apply much of what happens in Huddersfield nationwide because that would solve many of our problems—one can see that only a few hundred people in the United Kingdom would take part in this rather miserable scheme. I have always thought that it was an insult to human nature to say to a person, "Go on your knees for this meanly paid job and we will make it up to you. We shall slip you twenty quid so that you do not lose too much face with the wife." I do not believe that extending this scheme to the nation will have a significant impact on the appalling and growing unemployment problems.

Liberals, with our emphasis on redistributing wealth, must be aghast at the cancellation of the gift tax without replacing it with something. We have never held a strong brief for the capital transfer tax in the form in which it was introduced by Labour, because that was a silly tax on the giver. We have always said that a substantial, rapidly ascending scale of gift tax should be imposed on the recipient, according to the size of the gift and the recipient's wealth. This would mean that a person of great wealth who was getting on in years would be given every encouragement through the tax system to divide his wealth into a large number of relatively small portions which would be liable for only a modest rate of accession or gift tax or would escape tax altogether. The millionaire who insisted on endowing only his son or daughter with the whole sum would have to warn his children that they would pay a swingeing tax immediately they received a gift of £1 million. That would have been a step forward. To abolish gift tax altogether is an appalling step back to Victorian times and one which we strenuously oppose.

Dr. Glyn: What is the Liberal party's attitude to the efforts made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor towards encouraging wider share ownership?

Mr. Wainwright: I am grateful again to a Conservative Member for introducing my concluding remarks. I like to wind up on an agreeable note.

I, for one, give an unqualified welcome to what the Chancellor calls the personal equity plan, which provides a strong tax incentive for those lucky enough to be able to make regular investments. We welcome that measure with some pride of authorship, because we proposed it for many years in various forms during Finance Bill debates. Each time we made that proposal the Treasury spokesman— whether Conservative or Labour — assured hon. Members in stern tones that it would cost the earth, that there would be no limit to the demands it would impose on the Revenue and that therefore they could not recommend that their colleagues should support it. Better late than never—I, for one, want to give the scheme a fair wind. We must bear in mind always, however, that it is a scheme for the lucky—for those who can put aside sums for investment. Alas, at the present time, that is only a fraction of our population.

5.47 pm

Mr. David Knox (Staffordshire, Moorlands): I should like to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on his third Budget speech. His first two Budget speeches were well constructed and to the point, and both were brief, as Budget speeches go. Today, my right hon. Friend has maintained the high standards he established on those two occasions. The House should be grateful to him for that.

I welcome the changes concerning VAT and charities, both on the expenditure side—I think particularly of the concession for talking newspapers for the blind — and especially on the giving side. I welcome the Green Paper "The Reform of Personal Taxation", which was published today. Obviously, I cannot comment at present on that document, but it will be carefully studied in the months ahead.

I am glad that my right hon. Friend has increased income tax thresholds. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Sir K. Lewis), I should have preferred my right hon. Friend not to reduce the standard rate of income tax by 1p in the pound but to concentrate all the relief on thresholds. Frankly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding said, the reduction in the standard rate of income tax is so small that it is unlikely to have any effect, and it is especially unlikely to have any incentive effect. I have no desire to make any great point about this. One always welcomes reductions in taxation even if they are not the selection one would have made oneself.

I welcome the increase in the VAT threshold and the improvement in the business expansion scheme. I particularly welcome the new scheme to encourage share ownership. Like the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright) I am a member of the Wider Share Ownership Council and I believe strongly in the spread of share ownership as widely as possible in our society, for the reasons advanced by the hon. Member for Colne Valley and my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding. I was pleased to hear about the expansion of the

community programme, along with the other measures to help the unemployed. They are nothing like enough, but I welcome those measures as far as they go.

I turn to the general state of the economy and especially unemployment. When I spoke in this debate 12 months ago, I said that unemployment was the principal problem facing Britain. Then the Chancellor introduced what he claimed was "a Budget for jobs". I do not think that it is unfair to say that his expectations have not been fulfilled. Unemployment has continued to rise during the past 12 months and despite the measures announced today, it will at best stabilise and at worst continue to rise in the next year.

Unemployment remains our principal economic problem—as it has been for far too long now. For all the talk about measures to reduce it, unemployment has continued to worsen over the years. I believe that we have now reached the point where this cannot be allowed to continue. This afternoon the Chancellor told us about the Government's success in taming inflation and improving industrial relations. I readily acknowledge and warmly applaud these successes, but for a long time we have also been told that lower inflation and better industrial relations were essential prerequisites for increased manufacturing output and reduced unemployment, yet, last week, I was told by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry, that manufacturing output was 5 per cent. lower than it was six years ago. We all know what has happened over the last six years and what is continuing to happen today with unemployment. Clearly lower inflation and better industrial relations are not enough. They have not had the desired effect on unemployment and, frankly, they show no signs of doing so.

I do not believe that the present level of unemployment is necessary or indeed inevitable. From 1945 to 1974, under Labour and Conservative Governments we had full employment. This was achieved on the basis of the policies outlined in the 1944 White Paper on employment, the foreword to which stated:

"A country will not suffer from mass unemployment so long as the total demand for its goods and services is maintained at a high level."

In my view, it was because the demand for goods and services in the British economy was maintained at a high level between 1945 and 1974 that we had full employment during those years.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): I have heard my hon. Friend make the same speech for many years. Surely between 1945 and 1974 there was great and hidden unemployment as a result of the massive overmanning in industry, which is the cause of many of our troubles today.

Mr. Knox: I do not want to be diverted too far from my speech. All I would say to my hon. Friend is that there is quite as much under-employment in industry today as there was in those years. If my hon. Friend's point is correct, there would not have been the overall reduction in manufacturing output that there has been over the past six years. It is very worrying to think that manufacturing output today is not only lower than it was in 1979 but is lower than it was in 1973. These facts do not quite substantiate the point that my hon. Friend is making.

I return to what I was saying. I was making the point that in my view it was because the demand for goods and services was at a high level for the years from 1945 to 1974 that we had full employment. Equally, in my view it was because the demand for goods and services in Britain has not been maintained at a high level since 1974 that we have had such high unemployment in these past 12 years. I believe that we shall continue to have high unemployment until we return to the demand management policies that were so successfully pursued in the 30 years after the war.

This means that, if we are serious about unemployment, we must raise the level of demand to bring it into line with our productive capacity. This cannot be done straight away. It will take a long time. It will not be easy, but it ought to be done and we ought to start now. The usual retort to pleas for a return to demand management policies is that these were the policies that failed in the 1970s. Far be it for me to say that the 1970s was the brightest decade in our economic history. It was certainly not. But since demand management policies had a proven track record over many years prior to the 1970s, I should have thought that the causes of our problems then were more likely to be those factors that were peculiar to the 1970s—the breakdown of Bretton Woods, the commodity price explosion of the early 1970s, the escalation of oil prices in the mid-1970s and again in the late 1970s, and the flow of oil from the North sea. All these caused economic chaos at home and abroad and they provide, for me, far more plausible reasons for the difficulties we faced in the 1970s than demand management policies based on the 1944 White Paper.

I believe that we must return to this approach to the management of our economy as a matter of urgency, and I regret that that was not announced today. Today's Budget will raise output only by the underlying increase in capacity. It will not raise the level of economic activity sufficiently to take up any slack and so reduce unemployment. In my view, the Chancellor should have taken much stronger action to raise the level of demand and so the level of activity. Only the Government can do this. It can be done either by cutting taxes without decreasing public expenditure or by increasing public expenditure without increasing taxes or by a mixture of the two. In my view the Chancellor should have increased thresholds by even more than he has done and he should have introduced a substantial programme of public expenditure on the infrastructure—on roads, railways, education, the Health Service, housing and, above all, housing improvements.

These measures would be additional measures and no extra revenue should be collected to pay for them. Of course, such a policy would involve an increase in the public sector borrowing requirement. In terms of resources, there is no reason why this should be inflationary because there is plenty of spare capacity. In terms of finance, the initial increase in the public sector borrowing requirement would, to some extent, be reduced as benefit payments to the newly employed fell and tax receipts from them rose. Nor would interest rates be likely to be affected, as their main determinant is the level of international interest rates rather than domestic factors.

At present, the British economy is operating at about 20 to 25 per cent. below capacity. Over 3 million people are out of work. A large number of people are engaged in schemes to alleviate unemployment which are, frankly, not very productive or economically beneficial. Millions at work are under-employed and enormous capital assets are under-utilised. If we are serious about creating jobs and reducing unemployment, the level of demand must be

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increased. If unemployment is to be conquered, we must go for a rate of economic growth which is faster than the underlying growth of capacity. I regret that the Chancellor chose not to take such a course today.

5.59 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): I agree with many of the sentiments expressed by the hon. Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox). He has made many speeches of a similar nature in the House and he is to be commended for that.

First, let me deal with the good things in the Budget. There are some good proposals, although Opposition Members recognise that they are few and far between. For instance, the tax relief for charities is to be welcomed. One cannot but admire the work done by voluntary organisations in our society today, particularly for the disabled. There has been a great increase in that work. My only proviso is that it is essential to define what is a bona fide charity. I should hate to think that, for instance, Eton school would benefit from those proposals.

The Chancellor has announced an 11p increase on a packet of 20 cigarettes. Such an increase was to be expected. If it is the last straw that assists people to give up that unhealthy habit it is a good proposal.

Petrol taxation must be seen in the context of the rise in the costs of transport, because a rise in transport costs increases the cost of just about everything else. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that the oil companies are brought into line so that petrol prices do not rise. As the Chancellor has pointed out this afternoon, there is no need for them to do so.

It needs to be appreciated that the vast bulk of freight —8 tonnes out of every 10 tonnes—now goes by road in Britain. Likewise, the car is no longer a luxury. In Britain, 25 million people hold a driving licence and nine out of 10 passenger miles are travelled by road. Road taxes now stand at over £12,000 million, yet the national expenditure on our roads is not a quarter of that figure. Therefore, the Chancellor made a wise decision not to increase petrol taxes directly in line with the recent fall in prices due to the collapse of the oil market.

This is the Chancellor's third consecutive Budget. Like earlier speakers, I give him full marks for presentation this afternoon. The right hon. Gentleman's first Budget was described as a Budget for enterprise and he still insists on talking about recovery. But we are entitled to ask him: what recovery? That is particularly so when manufacturing output is still 6 per cent. below the 1979 figure and when manufacturing investment is still 10 per cent. below the 1979 figures. Our new deficit in manufacturing trade is set to shoot up to £4·5 billion in 1986. Training has been drastically cut, with engineering apprenticeships cut to around 9,000. Meanwhile, bankruptcies in 1985 hit a new record. That is the picture of Britain's recovery that the Chancellor chooses to forget.

Last year, the Chancellor's Budget was said to be one for employment. Then unemployment increased by 115,301, so he did not have much success in that respect. Up until a few weeks ago it was said that this Budget would feature tax handouts. Then the bottom fell out of the oil market, so the Budget format had to be changed. We are now presented with yet another Budget for employment. In the months ahead we shall watch the employment figures with great interest. Meanwhile, to pretend that the puny employment measures in the budget will do anything more than scratch the surface of this horrendous problem is simply an exercise in kidology.

Unemployment has been compared to a tap left running —sheer waste. The figures bear out that contention. For instance, the annual cost of keeping 3·3 million people out of work in lost revenue and benefit is conservatively estimated to be nearly £17 billion. That would be enough to abolish VAT or to halve the standard rate of income tax.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Is my hon. Friend aware that one aspect of the reversal of Government policy vis-a-vis the unemployment problem—which was revealed in an answer to a parliamentary question two weeks ago—is the creation of fully 5,400 jobs in local Department of Health and Social Security offices up and down the country?

Mr. Hughes: That is one means of creating jobs, but not exactly the most satisfactory one.

More than 1·3 million have been out of work for more than a year. Half of that number have been unemployed for three years or more. Those figures point to much demoralisation and they engender the social problems which are becoming such a feature of our society.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): My hon. Friend has hit the nail on the head. In addition to social problems, unemployment affects health. The Secretary of State continually points to the increasing demands on our Health Service, yet all the research shows that demands on the hospital and family practitioner services have trebled because of the effects of unemployment on health.

Mr. Hughes: My hon. Friend has been in the House a long time and I know that he speaks with vast experience on that subject. A survey carried out in my constituency in Newport some months ago bears out the increase in health problems as a result of mass unemployment. We in the Newport area suffered heavily from massive steel redundancies.

The Government have no political will to tackle unemployment. Many individuals and bodies have recognised the follies of the Government's economic policies. As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition pointed out this afternoon, there is an alternative. In Wales, on St. David's day this year we had what is known as a declaration on unemployment. Signed by prominent men and women throughout the principality, it said:

"We are a group of people with different views on political and social questions, but we all think the present level of unemployment in Wales is intolerable. It has destructive social and economic effects, and demoralises those who are not given the opportunity of contributing to the community through useful work. There have been developments in policy to deal with the problem, but there is much more that can and should be done. The objective now must be to achieve a substantial fall in unemployment. We therefore urge the Government to take effective measures to expand the economy, and otherwise to create, for those now unemployed, more opportunities of doing useful work."

As I said, that document was signed by a group of non-political prominent citizens in Wales. They know and realise that something can and should be done about the problem of unemployment.

The recent report of the Conservative-dominated Select Committee on Employment put forward detailed proposals

for the creation of 750,000 jobs specifically for the long-term unemployed in urban rehabilitation, health care and private industry, with a sweetener of £40 per week to the employer. The cost of the proposals is put at just over £3 billion over three years. That is a third of the amount earmarked for tax cuts in the same period. My right hon. Friend the Shadow Chancellor recently put forward Labour's carefully costed proposals for creating 1 million jobs in two years. Why cannot the Government take some positive action to tackle the horrific problem of unemployment?

Twenty years ago this month I was elected to the House. The following year I recall the Budget of my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), on 11 April 1967. He launched his Budget with the slogan "Steady as she goes". Some of us, particularly the new Members, thought that he was being a bit too steady at the time. However, he had some justification for acting in the way he did, bearing in mind that at the time unemployment stood at 610,500—2·61 per cent. of the work force. Now, unemployment figures show 3·3 million people out of work, with countless thousands more ready to take up employment if a suitable vacancy occurs. In that sense, the Budget we have heard this afternoon could well be described as "steady as she sinks".

With this Government, there is no hope for people out of work, but the Labour party has the policies to tackle Britain's fundamental problems. I am increasingly confident that, after the next general election, the Labour party will be given the opportunity to introduce its policies.

6.12 pm

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): I have always been an admirer of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, and I believe that his Budget speech today, which was a very clever one, has encouraged his supporters and not given any ground to his critics. In all, I think that he has done a very good job and it will be difficult for the Opposition to try to find much fundamental fault with the Budget.

My right hon. Friend may not be very good at kissing the babies, but he never takes his eyes off his main aim, which is to get the economy right by squeezing out inflation—we have heard so much about inflation from Opposition parties—getting back to honest money and controlling public expenditure, which is always difficult in any democracy. Everyone knows what a difficult task he had this year with the sudden diminution in the oil revenues. I believe that both he and the country will gain in the long run by the great drop in the price of oil. It is bound to be good for world trade, for our manufacturing industry and for my part of the world, the west midlands, where industries have suffered so much during recent years.

The whole trend of the Government's policies is to try to get the state off the backs of our people so that they can harness their energies to help themselves with the least hindrance or interference from Government. I was horrified to hear of one case which will give an example of our extraordinary society. An old lady died of hypothermia in a large town where eight of her children were living nearby. Surely we must try to encourage in every way possible a personal, individual and family sense of responsibility.

We all know that taxation is still far too high. It is now clear that we shall have to wait another year before it can be substantially reduced. However, I welcome what the Chancellor has done this year. I particularly welcome the help to the lower paid. Even so, more needs to be done to give an incentive to all those who wish to work and earn a living if they possibly can.

I also welcome the further measures to help the unemployed — which I do not underplay as some Opposition Members do — and to improve training. Training is vital to our industrial and commercial future and to enable us to fight off foreign competition. I welcome the cut in the stamp duty on shares. Share ownership should extend much more widely until nearly everyone is a shareholder in one way or another. Of course, I welcome the special help given in the Budget to the small investor.

I must now say something from the heart which nobody else has yet said and which I say as a high Tory. I am disappointed that the Chancellor did not tax the banks. As an old-fashioned Tory who much prefers the landed to the moneyed interest, I am always inclined to look with a jaundiced eye on the banks and the working of some of the institutions in the City. The banks could have done more to help the small business man. We all know, from their marvellous offices with their thick pile carpets, their lunches and everything else, that they can easily make money without anything like the sweat and tears of the ordinary industrial business man.

Of course I am proud, and we should all be proud, of the City and of the great part it plays in our national and economic life. However, there are blemishes. My father and grandfather both worked in the City. They were both successful but I think that they were modest men. Certainly, in the Stock Exchange they took enormous pains with the private client. Today that spirit and tone is not as it used to be. A new breed of men, slicker, smarter and more ruthless than ever, have come in and they do not do this country any good.

We know of the dishonesties that unfortunately have affected parts of the City, and I am sure that the Government will tackle those as vigorously as possible. I am surprised that no one has mentioned, the strident vulgarity in the colossal advertising campaign—whole page after whole page in the national press — in the takeover battles. These do no good. To see great companies slanging each other in knocking copy is quite disgraceful. I wish the Chancellor would curb those activities and put swingeing taxes on such advertisements.

I am also concerned about some of the transfer fees, as they are called, and astronomic salaries of very young men in the City which bear no comparison to salaries in industry or anywhere else. That is something which the Chancellor should keep his eyes on.

People expect increases in the taxes on drink, tobacco and petrol, at least as much as the increase in inflation. I think that we have been agreeably surprised this year. The tax on petrol was minimal, there is no tax increase on spirits which, after all, are expensive, and the tax rise on cigarettes was what most people expected. Even so, I much prefer indirect to direct taxation.

We are all looking forward to reductions in the bank rate. However, important as that is, it is even more important for management in industry not to grant wage

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increases which are greater than the rate of inflation, or greater than the productivity of the organisation concerned.

In spite of all the Government's critics, and all that we have heard this afternoon, there is a great deal now going for the Government. The pound has not collapsed with the fall in oil prices, the stock market is booming and the Americans and other foreigners wish to invest here. Production and productivity are increasing year by year. World commodity prices are falling. International interest rates are falling. Soon house mortgages and credit will be cheaper. In time I believe that, following the drop in the price of oil, the unemployment figures will start to fall —I hope substantially. Industry is much more efficient and one hopes to see British goods taking a greater share of the home market.

Reference was made earlier in the debate to the need to increase demand. But the demand is there. The Sainsburys, the Waitroses, the car showrooms and the shops that sell refrigerators are packed with people. The problem is that they are buying foreign, not British goods. The answer is not to pump more money into the economy but to get British firms to become more efficient. There is no other way. That is what this Government have been trying to do and they have succeeded in doing it. Exports are good and I believe that they will improve still further.

Let the Opposition remember that, despite the black spots—all of us know that there are black spots—people in this country, as we have seen from the official figures in "Social Trends", are more prosperous than ever before. The Government should be able to take some credit for that.

In spite of all the unemployment, I have noticed in my constituency that for the first time many people are buying their homes. Many of them have a motor car and many of them go abroad for their holidays. All of them are becoming Conservatives. They are some of the strongest supporters of this Government. I find that in the main the complaints come from those in the very high income brackets. Fortunately, there are more people in the lower income brackets than in the higher income brackets and I therefore have little fear about the outcome of the next general election.

There is no cause whatsoever for us to try to make the Government change course. To do so would mean that all the sacrifices that have been made in recent years have been in vain. Within a few months the International Monetary Fund would be called in again and there would be a colossal economic and financial crash. Any weakening of resolve, as is suggested by some of our more timorous brethren, would be disastrous. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I believe that the country at large will give a very warm welcome to his Budget.

6.22 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): The hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) will forgive me if I do not follow him too far in his revolutionary and daring attack upon the banks. All I would suggest to him is that when he assaults those marble halls he should put Barclays bank, Otley road, Shipley, first on his list.

This is Sheikh Yamani's first Budget in his new period of dominance of the British economy. I hope that Sheikh Yamani will be better as a maker of Budgets than the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), whose first Budget for enterprise saw our share of world trade drop disastrously and whose second Budget for jobs saw unemployment rise precipitously. Therefore, Sheikh Yamani's Budget might have a slightly better effect.

The Government have been robbed of a confidence trick that they were hoping to play on the British people. It was clearly the Chancellor of the Exchequer's intention to come to this House on Budget day and claim that the benefits to this country of oil tax revenues and their effect upon our economy were the result of the Government's policies and that the fruit of those policies would be tax cuts. That would have been a confidence trick. The Chancellor has been robbed of the ability to play that confidence trick.

Sheikh Yamani's impact in reducing the price of oil is a foretaste of what is to come. It is a foretaste of the problems that lie ahead for the British economy as the oil revenue contribution begins to run out. When that happens, this Chancellor will have left us disastrously exposed. The Chancellor and the Government have weakened and undermined the alternatives to oil by neglecting the manufacturing sector of the economy upon which we used to depend for our balance of payments survival. The Government have destroyed a quarter of this country's manufacturing base. They have destroyed 1·8 million jobs in manufacturing industry. They have turned us from being a net exporter of manufactured goods into a net importer of manufactured goods. That will leave us disastrously exposed when the oil price comes down precipitously, as it already has. We have come to the end of the easy, irresponsible years that the Chancellor and his predecessor have thrown away. We have come to the nub of the problem: what to do after oil.

There were two approaches to the oil wealth which Britain began to enjoy under this Government and which distinguished this Government from every previous Government who did not benefit from oil wealth. The first approach—the sensible approach that the Labour party would have adopted to oil—would have been to invest that wealth in our productive economy. It should have been used to rebuild our creaking productive economy and provide a massive overdraft facility in order massively to expand the economy. Our oil wealth would have allowed us to do that by ending the balance of payments constraints which had checked every previous attempt at expansion. In other words, it could have been used to run the economy in a way which would have produced growth to offset the effects of our oil wealth upon the exchange rate.

It would have been sensible to invest in this country and to build up productive assets and resources, which would have enabled us to grow and expand in a way that had never been possible before. However, the Government chose the opposite approach. They allowed oil to push up the value of the pound. They compounded that process by their consistent policy of high interest rates, which have kept the pound grossly over-valued throughout this period. Consequently, our manufacturing base has been ruined.

The high value of the pound has facilitated the massive export of capital—stashing away overseas the benefits from oil. This has benefited not the whole community, but only some of the community. Our transient oil benefit has been invested not in the productive capacity of this country

but in the productive capacity of our competitors. The Government chose that alternative. They have used the balance of payments benefits of oil to pay for imported manufactured goods, which have destroyed jobs in this country. The Government have used the tax revenues from oil to support those who are now unemployed because of the effects of oil on the balance of payments. It has been an absolute and total folly. It has resulted in a waste of oil revenues and it has compounded the industrial and manufacturing problems that we faced before the oil came on stream. Having wasted that asset, the problem is what to do about the situation that the fall in oil prices has generated. There are two responses——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Will not the hon. Gentleman pay credit to those companies that operate overseas and that last year brought into this country invisibles that amounted to £7·5 billion net? Will he not pay a tribute to industry which has invested £60 billion in new equipment and buildings in this country?

Mr. Mitchell: The bulk of our exports have been in the form of the export of capital and portfolio investment. Last year it amounted to about £20 billion and it was invested in productive capacity overseas. There have been some success stories, but the main reason for firms investing in jobs overseas is that it has not been profitable to invest in this country because of the way in which the economy has been run by this Government.

There were two responses. The first would have been — the Chancellor could have gone for it today — to increase taxation or borrowing to compensate for the loss of oil revenue. According to the autumn statement prediction, that loss must be about £7 billion. That could have been combined with a lower interest rates policy, which would have provided for some expansion of the economy.

The alternative approach would have been to keep interest rates high in order to strengthen the capital account and bring in money to compensate for the weakening of the current account balance of payments, thanks to the falling price of oil. At the same time, demand could have been damped down and taxes cut. The two approaches are alternatives and to a large extent they are mutually exclusive: increase taxes and lower interest rates, or increase interest rates and hope to expand by lowering taxes, which is what the Chancellor has done. The latter has the advantage of no inflationary consequences and no odium for the Chancellor as a result of increasing taxes, but it is the weaker of the two alternatives because interest rates will remain high. There have been persistent rumours, like a kind of continuous mirage dangled before the people, of interest rate cuts coming but never quite arriving. After the mountains have laboured in this fashion, there might be a squeaking mouse of a minor interest rate cut.

Interest rates are much higher in this country than in the countries of any of our competitors. In real terms, allowing for inflation, they are probably double the level of most of our competitors. Although there will be a minor reduction, interest rates will remain high. That imposes a crippling burden on everybody—on the householder, on the person with an overdraft, on local government and, most of all, on manufacturing industry, which needs finance for investment. We need a dramatic increase in investment, bearing in mind the figures given earlier about the fall in investment. This economy will not get the benefit of the expansion that will occur overseas because of the fall in the oil price. As a result of the strategy of high interest rates, there will be no fall in unemployment— the crucial problem that the Chancellor needed to tackle.

Dr. Godman: Is not one of the most realistic indications of the Government's performance over the last few years the fact that almost 40 per cent. of the population of the great city of Glasgow has to subsist on social security?

Mr. Mitchell: That is exactly right, and the Chancellor has not allowed for the horrendous cost of unemployment. It must be costing the Exchequer about £20 billion. I do not know the latest estimate for each person out of work, but it may be £5,000 or £6,000 a year and that represents a horrendous cost to the Exchequer. The Chancellor is in that situation simply because he has run the economy for deflation and for discipline rather than for growth and expansion. The problem he should have faced is what to do now. The prescription the Chancellor should clearly have gone for is one to reduce interest rates as a central aspect of Government policy. There is no point in saying that markets decide interest rates, because interest rates are under the effective political control of the Government and can be brought down by the Government. The minimum reduction necessary is 4 per cent., which would bring us down to somewhere near the level of our competitors. It would not bring us to their level, but it would be somewhere near. That is the key to getting the pound down, because the pound is still grievously overvalued, especially against the deutschmark, where the over-valuation is about 30 per cent. To become competitive with the deutschmark we would need a devaluation of about 22 per cent.

The sterling index, at 74, is now substantially up on its low point of last year—4 per cent. up in money terms and much more in real terms because our inflation rate is that much higher. Unless we reduce interest rates and bring the pound down with them, we will not be able to participate in the world expansion. We will not be able to stem the rising tide of imports and get back into the markets we have lost overseas. That is because our export prices are now some 30 per cent. higher than they were on average for 1973 and 1976, and they were not especially competitive then. How are we to get back into the markets that we have lost without a competitive currency? That competitiveness is conditional on getting interest rates down.

The second approach of the Chancellor should have been to borrow and spend. There is nothing like public spending for stimulating the economy, creating growth and putting people back to work. I should like to offer the Chancellor Mitchell's law. If he looks at the G5 economies over the six years from 1979 to 1984 he will find a direct correlation between the increase in public spending in those economies and the level of unemployment. The biggest increase in public spending—8·6 per cent.—was in the United States, and the unemployment increase in the United States has been only 1·6 per cent.

In Britain, at the other end of the scale, the total public expenditure increase has been 3 per cent. and the unemployment increase has been 8 per cent. The other economies are ranged at intermediate levels depending on how much they have increased public spending. Public

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spending is the only way of using the under-used resources in our economy and the only way of giving our economy the kind of stimulus that President Reagan gave the American economy and which resulted in the creation of 8 million jobs. There is no point in saying it cannot be done, because 8 million jobs have been created in America in less than three years. That is the kind of expansion we need, spending not on the same objectives of defence and armaments but on useful public purposes.

The Labour party proposes an increase in the public sector borrowing requirement of around £6 billion. That is an increase on top of the present level plus asset sales —in other words, an increase on top of the £12 billion public sector fiscal deficit. That would put unused resources back to work. It would put building workers back into jobs and tackle the housing crisis that is building up. That is what the Chancellor should have got on with.

The third matter to which the right hon. Gentleman should have devoted some attention is clearly social justice. He should take back from the richest 5 per cent. of our population, those earning over £25,000 a year, the benefits that have been showered on them in a continuous dribble of about a dozen concessions in each Budget under this Government. There have been concessions in capital transfer tax and capital gains tax. More benefits in capital transfer tax on unearned income have been repeated today, to an amount of about £3·6 billion annually, and that has all been given to that richest 5 per cent. If that is taken back —and it can be taken back—we could use that money to increase pensions by £5 for a single pensioner and by £8 for married pensioners. We could increase child benefit by £3 and put the long-term unemployed on the long-term supplementary benefit rate, which is where they should have been all along. That would stimulate the economy, because those people spend their money on British goods and not on buying BMWs and on overseas trips. That is a stimulus and a matter of social justice that it is essential to fulfil.

The fourth purpose is an expansion of employment schemes. It is tragic to see how little has been done in the Budget for the unemployed. Why could the Chancellor not take up some of the schemes put forward in the report from the Select Committee on Employment on special employment measures and the long-term unemployed? That Committee put forward three proposals: a building improvement scheme to provide 300,000 jobs; the employment of 100,000 long-term unemployed in the social services and the National Health Service; and the introduction of a subsidy to private employers to take on long-term unemployed in addition to their existing employees. The total cost of those recommendations was only £3·3 billion.

Why has the Chancellor devoted so little of his Budget to the necessary objective of bringing down the horrendous level of unemployment? I concede that the Government have been absolutely brilliant at bringing down the unemployment figures, thanks to all the fiddles, manipulations, changes, doctoring, Tebbitising and sanitising that has gone on. What they have not brought down is unemployment, because it has continued to rise to a point where the long-term unemployed are now four times more numerous than they were at the height of the depression in the 1930s. That is a national tragedy and a waste of human resources, yet all the Government can do is manipulate the figures.

The Government tell us that they have created 700,000 new jobs since 1983. They do not say that most of those jobs are part-time and filled by women. They do not say that the net loss in jobs since the Government came into power is 1·1 million. Those jobs have been thrown away since 1979. Jobs lost in the whole of the Common Market for the same period have amounted to only 500,000, less than half the number of jobs lost by this Government. We have a national tragedy and a national problem because our unemployment level, disguised though it is, is now higher than that of any major industrial country. It is a horrendous burden on the productive economy and that burden must be eased, not only for social justice but for economic efficiency.

Those are the priorities that the Chancellor should have gone for. As usual, being the artful dodger of economics, he has gone for fast footwork and has held out mirages about tax cuts to come next year — the infinitely postponed and never arriving tax cuts which have been the centrepiece of the Government's dangling carrot to lure Back Benchers through to the next election.

The reduction in the oil price provided an enormous opportunity for the economy, which should have been seized in this Budget. It is equivalent to an increase in the money supply. We could have done it for ourselves six, five, four, three, two or even one year ago. We had the ability to give the same stimulus to the economy by increasing spending and even by reducing taxes when we had high oil revenues. Now the benefit is being forced on us by Sheikh Yamani, whose budget this is. We could have done it for ourselves but we had to have it forced on us by the kindly sheikh.

It is an opportunity to expand. Given the way the Government have ruined the manufacturing sector, our need to expand is more crucial and more desperate than that of any other competing economy. It is a matter of national survival. Unless we rebuild the manufacturing sector, expand industry and get the economy to grow again, how are we to pay our way in the world when the oil contribution fades away entirely? How are we to provide jobs for our young people? How are we to provide the growth to improve the standard of living, which is what the modern electorate wants? How are we to provide the public spending to improve the quality of life, which the public have a right to expect? How are we to do all those things and avoid the fate of a miserable, embittered, declining, divided society, which is where we are heading unless we expand the economy and rebuild the productive sector so that we can provide jobs and survive?

At the end of all the wasted years under this Government it will be tragic if we are to go back to the same balance of payments constraint which has strangled growth in almost every decade since the war. If the Government throw away the benefit of the oil price reduction it will be a national tragedy. To make amends to the people, the Chancellor should have done something in this Budget. Instead, with the same old irresponsibility, he is mortgaging the future by continuous and increasing asset sales; he is desperate to pay the cost of unemployment by selling off national assets. What is more, he is selling them off at a cut price.

The prices that the Government are getting are so inadequate that it is almost as if these were distress sales.

A business man's Government cannot even get a good price for the assets which they are flogging. What a farce that is. They are not even making sensible use of the money they are getting from those sales. They are laying in store horrendous problems for the time when those assets will no longer produce revenue. Because of the asset sales, particularly gas, there will have to be an increase in taxation. The Government should have used the money from asset sales to deal with unemployment.

This, then, is an irresponsible Budget from an irresponsible Chancellor. The Chancellor should have taken the name of Omar Khayyam, with this Budget as his Rubaiyat. The slogan is, live for today: "Take the cash in hand and waive the rest," or, take the cash in hand and wave the Order Papers, as Conservative Members did earlier. I remind them and the Chancellor that there is still the brave music of a distant drum beating out the toll of what is to come as the oil contribution fades away and vanishes entirely. What do we do then to survive? *[Interruption.]* It is all right for hon. Gentlemen to make sedentary interjections about services. They will not provide jobs for kids and the wherewithal to survive We have now to provide for the hard future which is to come.

The best ephithet on the Budget comes from a compendium of abuse drawn up by the Chancellor's colleague, the Secretary of State for the Environment. It is a quotation from Kipling which sums up the Chancellor's approach and the economic strategy of the Government:

> "I could not dig, I dared not rob;
> Therefore I lied to please the mob.
> Now all my lies are proved untrue
> And I must face the jobs I slew.
> What tale shall serve me, here among
> Mine angry and defrauded young?"

6.44 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): The Budget will be welcomed precisely because it rejects the calls for fiscal irresponsibility which we have heard from the Opposition. The Chancellor has today reasserted his commitment to what *The Times* yesterday called

"stability in the large numbers, designed to vanquish inflation and foster growth combined with supply side changes designed to stimulate industry's response to the changed economic climate."

The crucial question facing the Chancellor is how far the Budget will advance us down the road to popular capitalism — the very phrase which he used in his Budget speech.

In three generations, thanks to generous tax incentives, home ownership has increased from 10 to 60 per cent. of the population. The property-owning democracy is a fact. But the share-owning democracy, the industry-owning democracy, the pension-owning democracy, the education-owning democracy and the health-owning democracy remain dreams. The generation of new wealth to finance those dreams from large cuts in the basic rate of taxation will remain a dream after the Budget, although the Chancellor has made an excellent start.

I intend to show how we can continue the Chancellor's work of making those dreams a reality. We should aim in this Parliament and the next, after the Conservatives have won the next general election, for large tax cuts. I can do no better than point to international comparisons and then to the American experience. If we take the single person's liability to basic rate income tax and social security rates in a group of countries, we find that the United Kingdom is still unfortunately top of the league. The amount taken by the state in the United Kingdom is 39 per cent., in West Germany 36 per cent., in the Netherlands 35 per cent., in France 22 per cent., in Japan 20 per cent., and in the United States 18 per cent. That is not a record for a Conservative Government, albeit doing their best, to be proud of. As the Chancellor said, it is no accident that the United States and Japanese economies are the most successful in the world.

What is even more instructive is the United States experience following President Reagan's tax cuts in 1983 which reduced taxes to the average of the 1970s. In an article in *Challenge*, Alan Reynolds wrote that it was

"never claimed that such a modest cut in tax rates would instantly raise taxable income enough to offset any revenue loss. The claim was instead that dynamic gains in economic growth over time would reduce spending on subsidies, transfer payments and bail-outs".

He added that after tax cuts

"the big boost was . . . from business investment, housing, and consumer durables. Real government purchases actually fell, and true consumption (services and nondurables) was quite weak. Exports staged a good recovery, despite poverty in the developing countries, and imports in 1983 were only 7·5 per cent. of GNP — down from 9·2 per cent in the weak-dollar years of 1979-80. In the first half of 1984, business investment sped up to a 20 per cent. rate of increase, and real GNP growth averaged a marvelous 8 per cent. between the second quarters of 1983 and 1984. Far from being an inflationary boom, as the monetarists had predicted, or a Keynesian consumer boom, the Reagan expansion has been an investment boom of unprecedented proportions. . . . Clearly, reduced marginal tax rates on capital did induce more investment, and reduced tax rates on labor were favorable to both investment and employment."

The efficacy of tax cuts is proved by international experience, and particularly by the American experience in recent years. Cuts in the base rate are preferable to increases in tax thresholds. I did not expect the Chancellor to have the courage to cut the base rate today, but I am delighted that he has done so. I suspect, and I hope, that it augurs a base rate of 25 or 26 per cent. by the end of this Parliament.

I know that the arguments between raising the thresholds and cutting the base rate have gone backwards and forwards over the years. My hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Sir K. Lewis) said today that if a change in the level of base rates was to have any significant effect on, for example, work incentives, it would have to be at least 2p in the pound reduction. I can only say to him, "Where do we start?" We have made a successful start today. The problem facing the Chancellor, of course, is that, because allowances have to be indexed each year, there is a built-in ratchet effect for future years, which means that there is a tendency for base rates to be reduced only in exceptional circumstances.

It is often said that an increase in tax allowances is the way to deal with the poverty and unemployment traps. The Institute for Fiscal Studies, in its budget briefing for 1986 estimates—this is an interesting point—that had

"the resources used to increase allowances been used to cut the basic rate, it could now be down to 26·5 per cent."

The question to be answered now, therefore, is, should we carry on down the road of increasing tax allowances, or should we go for an all-out drive for cutting the base rate?

It is interesting also that the IFS document says:

"The argument for cutting taxes by raising allowances has frequently been that the poverty and unemployment traps are relieved by taking people out of tax. It has been shown elsewhere

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(Dilnot 1984; Kay 1984) that raising allowances is in fact a remarkably inefficient way of relieving the poverty trap, and an ineffective way of relieving the unemployment trap."

However—the institute says this, not I—

"a cut in the base rate has a greater effect on the unemployment trap".

Those findings prove to me that there is little appreciable benefit, if we are talking about relieving the poverty and unemployment traps, in going for modestly raising tax thresholds rather than for cutting the base rate. But the great advantage of a cut in the base rate is a psychological one, because whether tax cuts are a good thing or not depends very much on whether they are capable of getting the economy moving. I believe that the American experience proves that they can do so.

What now of the drive towards a real participating democracy in which ordinary people can aspire to personal ownership of the major institutions that affect their daily lives? I am delighted that we are implementing today another successful United States device — a pension shelter. When I was writing this speech this morning, I never expected that the Chancellor would institute such a successful device. In America people are allowed to hold a personal investment account which is not taxable and is set at a $2,000 limit. This tax shelter concept has worked brilliantly in the United States, and the Chancellor will be pleased to hear that it has resulted in some people in their twenties investing $2,000 in a pension fund being offered at retirement no less than $1 million because of the intense competition for their accounts. It seems incredible to us that the scheme in America has actually been making millionaires of millions. The whole point is that it is a tax shelter around an infinitely transferable, personal and regularly itemised account, with personal statements, just like a bank account.

In Britain today we are extending the tax shelter to British industry. Imagine the stimulus that this will give to interest in shareholding and, of course, to British industry. The Chancellor is to be congratulated on overcoming the Treasury's traditional blinkered view of investment accounts. The hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright) mentioned this. The Treasury has thought historically only in negative terms of forgone revenue. If that Treasury view, which the Chancellor has today overcome, were to be accepted, there would never be any progress towards the kind of supply-side economics that have proved so successful in the United States.

Needless to say, starting in a small way, the investment tax shelters could be extended to health and education schemes. The sale of British Telecom has shown the way forward, but if we are to make shareholding more than just a hobby for the small investor we must use the tax structure to encourage him. These reforms could easily be accommodated, and are being accommodated, within the existing PAYE and social security systems. But if the two systems were fully integrated, as I hope they will be following the issue of the Green Paper today, the political barriers in their path would, I believe, be far fewer.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My hon. Friend has made an extremely good point, and he has mentioned British Telecom, which too often, perhaps, is mentioned to hon. Members. Will he also mention, as our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has mentioned today, the great and growing success of British Aerospace, which was offered on the British stock exchange by the Government and is proving to be an outstanding success involving outside money in something which hitherto was contributed to only by the Government?

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend makes a valid point and I concur with his remarks.

I was referring before his intervention to the integration of tax and benefit systems. I am amazed, having done some research into this, at how little research there is, either within the Treasury or outside, into how tax credit systems would facilitate share-owning investment schemes. I should like the Treasury to study how tax credits could be provided for each activity which the Government are clearly desperately anxious to encourage. Would it be possible, for instance, to provide a credit of £X for each individual for housing, which would meet in total the cost of state housing and could be topped up for higher-priced private housing? Would it be possible to give each individual a credit of, say, £Y equivalent to the cost of state education, which could be topped up with taxed income for more expensive private education? Why should these credits not be universally available, not just as tax-deductible expenses, as under the present systems, but as a universal right for the whole population?

All these ideas point in one direction — a new impetus to extending free choice for the individual. That aim demands not consolidation, but, as the Prime Minister has said, and as the chairman of the Conservative party has reiterated again this week, radical policies to ensure that there is real public pressure, not for increases in central and local government spending, but for greater opportunities to relieve the state of the burden of deciding how and what is to be provided for the individual and for letting the individual himself decide his own priorities.

6.57 pm

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Budget debates are always about figures and in the three minutes that I have I hope to make five points.

This is my 27th Budget. Having listened to Conservative Members, I believe that one of the problems resulting from the last six or seven budgets—since 1979—is that the country has been divided as never before. Sometimes when I hear Conservatives talking I feel that they live in a very different world from me.

I want to take up a few of the points that emerged as the Chancellor of the Exchequer glowered across the Dispatch Box at us and, as usual, gave us naught for our comfort.

First, I cannot reconcile the right hon. Gentleman's comments about housing with what happens at my Saturday morning surgery. There are 650 homeless families in sleazy accommodation in Paddington, 15,000 people on the housing list, and my ratepayers are paying £40,000 a week, but I hear the Chancellor talking about the marvellous housing that has been provided under the Conservative Government.

I welcome very much what the right hon. Gentleman has done about VAT for charities but, like my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), I hope that he does not mean that Eton will get a bit more. I hope too that as a result the Chancellor will do something about the grants for citizens advice bureaux, which are non-political and are under pressure because their grants are being cut off.

I do not have the time to go fully into the question of the unemployed, but I want to add one point to the excellent speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes). The Minister for Health comes to the House time and time again saying that more is being spent on health but also that more people are ill. I never thought that the Health Service was about more people being ill. However, if there are 3·4 million unemployed, the amount of illness that that generates means that the taxpayer has to find much more money for looking after them.

As the House knows, on 14 February the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave me the figure for taxation on cigarettes. I welcome very much the fact that he has now got £350 million extra. I hope that he will use that to remove prescription charges from very bad cancer cases and will also do something about sports sponsorship.

Debate adjourned.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Royal Assent

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts and Measures:

1. Consolidated Fund Act 1986
2. Agricultural Holdings Act 1986
3. Prevention of Oil Pollution Act 1986
4. Marriage (Wales) Act 1986
5. Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1986
6. Bishops (Retirement) Measure
7. Ecclesiastical Fees Measure

Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill

Order for Third Reading read.

7.1 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Edinburgh, West): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the third time.

When I moved the Second Reading of the Bill on 4 December, I immediately mentioned that it was of the utmost importance to Scotland. It involves in no sense a minor local issue, and I shall say why.

The case for the western relief road has consistently been argued on the ground that it would make environmental improvements to living and shopping conditions on the western side of Edinburgh. That in turn would benefit public transport through the relief of traffic congestion and would reduce the incidence of accidents and personal injuries by the separation of vehicles from busy shopping centres, pedestrians and cyclists.

Over and above that the Bill is essential for Edinburgh. It would bring benefits in its relationship to planning policies now approved by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland in connection with the west side of the capital. Those planning policies refer to the construction of a conference centre in Lothian road, and the facilitation of the expansion and the development of Edinburgh's financial and banking centre in the Lothian road, Morrison street, Semple street, Fountainbridge area. I understand that at this moment discussions are going on between the district council and the Scottish Development Agency on that subject.

Those policies also relate to communications between these developments, the national motorway network and Edinburgh airport. The capacity to link the proposed developments of a financial and banking centre along with a conference centre connected by the relief road to the outer city bypass would mean that communications would be greatly improved. Connecting those developments with the main areas of population in central Scotland, and with roads and air communications throughout the United Kingdom would undoubtedly increase the employment potential of Edinburgh's role as a financial and banking centre.

The provision of a conference centre and purpose-built parking facility, the last of which has just been approved by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State at the eastern extremity of the western relief road, will combine to support an initiative which has potential for the permanent creation of a very large number of jobs. Indeed, it is estimated that about 5,000 jobs would be created over a 10-year period in the development of financial services in Edinburgh.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Such loose statements are always being thrown round, particularly by some Conservative Members. The hon. Gentleman just said that it had been "estimated" that about 5,000 jobs would be created. By whom? On what basis was the calculation made? We should be told. It is no good hon. Members making bland statements without producing any evidence for them. People will start to believe them just because they have been made. We need some hard facts.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Lothian region structure plan goes into the matter in detail. The hon. Gentleman will find all the details that he wants in that plan. Moreover, the Edinburgh chamber of commerce passionately believes that thousands of jobs could be created. Of course the talks going on between the SDA and the district council are also very important.

I remind the House that financial services are a growth area in Scotland. The western relief road would enhance the attraction of Edinburgh as a financial and commercial centre for customers and investors. The gains in international terms would benefit not only Edinburgh but Scotland as a whole, so the Bill is wholeheartedly in Scotland's interests.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): The hon. Gentleman has made great play about financial services, but surely people are no longer sent all over the world, and no longer travel between London and Edinburgh. Such work is increasingly done by computers. Why should we build a motorway?

Lord James-Douglas Hamilton: Edinburgh is a great insurance centre. Insurance companies in Edinburgh are undertaking more and more insurance contracts relating not just to Scotland and the North sea but to many parts of Europe and beyond. Edinburgh is increasingly seen throughout western Europe as a centre of financial services. That is all to the good. Indeed, it is seen by many people as the second centre after London.

The issue of jobs weighs more heavily in the immediate term. I note that the trade unions on the construction side support the Bill. All Scottish Members of Parliament will have received a letter dated 12 February from Mr. George Wilmhurst, construction trades co-ordinator of the Transport and General Workers Union for Scotland. He wrote:

"My main concern is of course employment . . . The Edinburgh western relief road would provide approximately 1,500 jobs in the construction industry. It would, of course, have an effect on the plant hire industry and naturally there would be a huge quantity of building materials required."

Mr. Wilmhurst draws attention to the fact that the construction industry, which is labour-intensive, has suffered drastically, with a substantial reduction of those in employment over the past few years, stating:

"This project would also provide training for a number of apprentices and Youth Training Scheme trainees."

In wanting the Edinburgh western relief road to go ahead, Mr. Wilmhurst is strongly supported by Mr. Fraser, the acting regional secretary of the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians, who wrote on 4 March:

"I hereby confirm that our union agrees that this road should be given priority owing to the lack of work in the construction industry at present."

The unions are right to stress the importance of such employment opportunities, as they are important factors.

Mr. Foulkes: Surely the hon. Gentleman will agree that Opposition Members share the concern of the trade unions about the lack of employment opportunities not only in Edinburgh, but in the whole of Scotland. The hon. Gentleman and the unions will agree that exactly the same number of jobs would be created by the same amount of investment in a similar length of road in other parts of Scotland or, indeed, elsewhere in the Lothian region, or in other areas where it is desperately needed and where there are no objections to it—*[Interruption.]* Will the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) accept that, and will the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) shut up *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is some time since the hon. Gentleman represented constituents in the east of Scotland. Thousands of Edinburgh residents passionately want this scheme to go ahead. The hon. Gentleman asked his question as if a parliamentary commission had not sat for three and a half months, and as if a Joint Committee of both Houses had not considered the matter fully. The parliamentary commission and the Joint Committee sat for longer on this Scottish Bill than any other parliamentary commission or Joint Committee has done this century.

Mr. Maxton *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall return to that matter later. If the hon. Gentleman feels that I have not dealt with the point adequately, he can intervene later.

The primary purpose of the Bill is to relieve the shocking environmental conditions and improve road safety. At present large volumes of traffic are concentrated on the two principal radial routes from Edinburgh to the west: the A8 to Glasgow and the A71 to Lanarkshire. They are heavily overloaded with traffic. The A8, the main Glasgow road, passes through a series of major shopping centres, including those at Shandwick place, in Roseburn and in St. John's road, Corstorphine.

Similarly, the A71 passes through significant shopping centres on Dalry road and Gorgie road. Much of the road is narrow, congested and flanked by high density tenements and shops. More than 80,000 people live in the Edinburgh community served by those roads, and an even greater number use them for local services as shops are on both sides of the roads. Indeed, in the major shopping centres more than 1,000 pedestrians cross the roads every hour, in conflict with through traffic. There are schools either on the roads or in close proximity to them, and I receive representations from worried parents about the dangers to schoolchildren crossing them. They know that there are severe conflicts between through traffic, public transport, local traffic, shopping needs, pedestrians and school children. The consequences of that extremely unsatisfactory position are delays, frustration, danger and accidents. Each year there are about 3,000 accidents involving death or injury in west Edinburgh.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): The hon. Gentleman will know that while I was chairman of the inquiry I travelled daily to Edinburgh for more than three months. If the parked traffic at Corstorphine were cleared, access would be much easier.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Rubbish.

Mr. Martin: We are not considering what lies between the hon. and learned Gentleman's ears.

Is the hon. Gentleman aware that I could travel from my home in the north end of Glasgow to the Mound in Edinburgh in only 60 minutes? That is not an unreasonable length of time. If I could do it, any other driver should be able to.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The environmental capacity of the road in Corstorphine is 6,000 cars per day, but every day 24,000 cars use it. The hon. Gentleman's suggestion about removing parked cars would not begin to have the desired effect. It is one of the most congested streets in Britain, and certainly in east Scotland. There is no cure for it other than to build the western relief road in conjunction with the outer-city bypass.

The outer-city bypass may slightly relieve the position in Corstorphine, but all the evidence shows that the conditions in Gorgie-Dalry will worsen substantially. Gorgie-Dalry is not an advantaged area. Part of Gorgie is in my constituency, and all the estimates are that the traffic using Gorgie road would increase after the opening of the outer-city bypass.

On Second Reading the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) said of the western relief road:

> "I do not know how anyone can try to quantify the effect of that road on the number of accidents in that part of Edinburgh." —[*Official Report*, 4 December 1986; Vol. 88, c. 384.]

Since I did not have the opportunity to answer him then, I should like to do so now. The relief road is essentially a bypass for the communities of Corstorphine, Stenhouse, Gorgie-Dalry, Sighthill and Murrayfield-Roseburn on the western side of Edinburgh. It will take through traffic, the origin or destination of which is the centre of Edinburgh, away from the routes that pass through the heart of communities with shopping centres, throbbing with activity, and with schools and countless homes. Instead, it will place the traffic on a purpose-built road with the same bridges and crossing points for pedestrians as are now in existence over or under the railway line. The problems of delay and safety in existing communities will be mitigated by the diversion of traffic to the proposed road.

Mr. Alex Fletcher (Edinburgh, Central): I have listened carefully to my hon. Friend. He will not have neglected the fact that the relief to Corstorphine and other parts of the western end of the city will have a direct impact on the centre of my constituency, which is why I have objected to the Bill. Everything piles up in the centre of the city. First, will my hon. Friend turn his attention to the constitutional issue? I understand his enthusiasm for the road, but I hope that he is not enthusiastic about the facts that no independent public inquiry was held, and that only two teams of politicians considered the justification for the plan.

Secondly, will he turn his mind to the question of expenses, which should be awarded to objectors, in addition to the parliamentary commission, members of which will receive two thirds of their expenses? I hope that my hon. Friend will support the suggestion that an amendment may be passed in the other place to give objectors two thirds of the expenses that they incurred in the Joint Committee.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall deal with the question of expenses later.

The parliamentary commission considered whether the road would increase traffic in the city centre, but even the evidence provided by the objectors' expert witnesses admitted that the traffic in the city centre would not be substantially increased by the presence of the road. The technical advice was firmly to that effect, and that point was carefully examined.

It has been well established that dual carriageways have a much better accident record than single carriageways. That is because the central crash barriers greatly reduce the risk of accidents between overtaking vehicles. If the Bill is passed, huge benefits will accrue to pedestrians, regarding both the ease and safety of crossing roads, and more pleasant conditions on adjacent footways.

The relief road would reduce casualties by about 60 a year, and associated traffic management measures,

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including the closure of residential streets, widening pavements and diverting traffic to the relief road, would reduce accidents by a further 60. In other words, the relief road and associated measures would reduce serious personal injury accidents, including some deaths, by about 120 a year. That is the overwhelming moral justification for the Bill. It will save lives and greatly reduce the serious injuries sustained in west Edinburgh.

Moreover, the western relief road will greatly enhance the quality of life for thousands of Edinburgh citizens. As I said, even the technical evidence of the objectors showed that the road would produce environmental benefits. They were prepared to argue only about the scale.

Throughout, the stated intention of the Bill's sponsors has been to improve safety and the environment, and not to speed traffic. The Bill will affect not only those who live along the A71 and A8, because at present congestion along those routes causes traffic to spill into adjacent side streets, extending the problem still further. Through traffic management methods, about 30,000 vehicles or more would be diverted from those congested streets, once the relief road was completed. Those measures would not be possible without it.

The noise level of the 1,800 dwellings along these roads is above that for which double glazing is considered necessary. The construction of the road, even without other supplementary measures, would improve the position for more than 1,000 dwellings. With associated traffic management measures, the figure would rise to about 2,500 dwellings. Moreover, they would produce important benefits for businesses and shopping centres.

Mr. Fairbairn: On the matter raised by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher)—[HON. MEMBERS: "Your hon. Friend."]—I thought that that was taken for granted, although after what the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn, (Mr. Martin) said, perhaps my hon. Friend would not want me to be one of his hon. Friends. Does my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) appreciate that the objectors conceded before the Committee of both Houses that there would be no increase in traffic in central Edinburgh? Secondly, before we consider the possibility of amendments about expenses, perhaps the House or the other place should consider what the law is. We are not competent to grant such expenses under the law. Therefore, hon. Members should not become too emotional about the matter.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I shall deal with the question of expenses later. I do not accept what my hon. Friend said about the evidence of the experts employed by the objectors. Noise barriers will be erected, and should limit the impact of the new route, which is generally removed from existing residences. A small number of residences will be adversely affected, but that is far outweighed by the gain and the effect of the increases could be further mitigated by double glazing. About 20 houses need double glazing.

Atmospheric pollution will be minimised by the transfer of many slow-moving vehicles from confined spaces to a free-flowing road. The director of environmental health for Edinburgh district council is on record as supporting the proposal in the Bill. Benefits will be most significant in areas which give rise to most concern, but the levels of pollution within the relief road corridor would be below those being experienced in St. Johns road, Corstorphine, and below the lowest threshold which would cause any concern.

The outer-city bypass is no cure to the problem. It would reduce traffic in Corstorphine by 20 to 25 per cent., but the traffic in Gorgie-Dalry and Stenhouse would actually increase, as will traffic generally south of the Edinburgh-Glasgow railway. On Gorgie road, the traffic flow will increase by 50 per cent., and on Dalry road by 70 per cent. Gorgie-Dalry is not a wealthy area, and the intolerable environmental effects ensuing from the building of the outer-city bypass underline the need for the relief road.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will the proposal for the outer-city bypass increase through city traffic, or will it enable people, for example, from East Lothian or the Borders, who wish to get to Edinburgh airport to avoid more easily the city centre? If it does generate more traffic coming into the city, or at least traffic coming in at one point, does Lothian region propose any parking facilities to accommodate any such increases in full?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The district council proposed building new parking facilities next to the Sheraton hotel, and recently my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State gave approval. There will be 1,500 parking bays, but as cars use them for short periods they can accommodate several thousand cars a day. That deals effectively with one of the concerns which has been expressed about parking in the city centre.

Of course the outer city bypass is welcome in that it will remove from the city centre all traffic that can use the bypass, but it does have the problem that it will increase very substantially the traffic that comes into Gorgie-Dalry, especially if no relief road is built.

The net effect of the construction of the relief road will be to remove almost all the traffic from the residential areas south of the Edinburgh-Glasgow road and bring about a major reduction on the A71 road to Lanarkshire, while affording the potential to reduce traffic on that road principally to buses and local movement. The traffic on the A8 will be reduced to a quarter of its present level, and these improvements will be widely welcomed. There will be a marked improvement in bus services. The director of public transport supports the project and hopes that it will go through, because bus services would gain about three minutes on peak services. Each day there are about 2,500 bus journeys along the——

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): Will not the relief that will arise on the A8 coming in from Glasgow, in turn relieve the general pressure on traffic coming into Edinburgh from the Forth bridge direction? If some of the traffic opted to come in on the A8 route, and if there were less pressure on the road, would that not help traffic coming into Edinburgh from either the west or north?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It would make certain that there would be much less worry about permanent traffic jams. Later, I shall come to the proposals of the Edinburgh district council for its £100 million plan for development which would cause a permanent traffic jam in Corstorphine. My hon. Friend says there is a permanent traffic jam in it at the moment.

If the plans of the Edinburgh district council go through, then 30,000 traffic units will pass every day through Corstorphine, traffic will be totally clogged up, and life will be absolutely intolerable for those who live in the west of the city.

There are 2,500 bus journeys along the A71 and A8 each day. Higher bus running speeds on existing roads after the construction of the relief road will increase the popularity of public transport, and have its importance in attracting new users. For all these reasons, the quality of life will be improved for countless Edinburgh citizens, causing this Bill to have such massive support.

The idea of the relief road is not new. The Abercrombie plan for Edinburgh in 1949 anticipated the development of such a road, and in the 1960s Professor Buchanan had his own proposals. The Edinburgh development plan of 1965 also made provision for a new radial road, a west approach road to the M8.

Professor Buchanan wanted a six-lane motorway, and, as a result of his proposals, there was the suggestion of an intermediate circular route. As an Edinburgh councillor, I voted against those proposals because I felt that they were too extreme and would have destroyed a great many houses. Throughout, I have taken the position that for any road proposal to go through, the houses must be respected and the roads must not take precedence over them. I believe that as strongly as possible. This proposal is infinitely more modest than that of Buchanan, and is of a scale intended to fit the city.

The Lothian region had such a plan which set out the regional authority's policies on these proposals and relief roads, which would fit in with the pattern of communications outlined. This provides for the outer-city bypass and the extension of the M8 from the west to that bypass. The relief road and the M8 extension are planned as part of a comprehensive package.

In December 1982, the Lothian regional council appointed consultants to carry out a study of the proposed construction for a western relief road. From that moment, the objectors to this proposal were treated very fairly. I went to see the consultants to impress on them that houses must not be destroyed in large numbers. My representations were not in vain. They agreed that any scheme involving the wholesale destruction of houses would be unacceptable. That is why they came forward with the ingenious scheme of moving the railway line to the north to safeguard 240 council houses.

In May 1983, the consultants reported back to the regional council and recommended that the relief road was justified in terms of environmental and traffic benefits, and that it should be built as a dual carriageway as soon as practicable, but it was not to be opened before the Sighthill section of the outer-city bypass. They recommended that the planning and design of the road should maximise environmental protection, including the construction of noise barriers and full landscape treatment. The scheme was to be undertaken in such a way as to secure the reorganisation or relocation of businesses without loss of employment. As far as possible, the loss of recreational facilities would be made good by the provision of alternative sites. Permanent environmental improvements with adjoining communities were to be secured by comprehensive planning and traffic management measures to give priority to local needs. In coming to these conclusions, the consultants conclusively rejected the no-road option.

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Member was talking about moving the railway line into the strip of the Carrick Knowe golf course. Is the hon. Member aware that, as far as I understand it, this means that what is currently a straight railway line will have curves introduced? Since in other parts of Britain, in France, and all over the world, people are getting curves out of railway lines and making them straight, is this not a retrograde step? What explanation does the hon. Member have for this? Will that not discourage people from using the railway, and make congestion in Edinburgh even worse?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: British Rail has had every opportunity to make that point, but it has not objected and it did not participate in the parliamentary commission, as far as I know. That has not been a worry about which the parliamentary commissioners or the Joint Committee was concerned, and it is not a problem.

Mr. Martin: The hon. Member read the transcript of the hearing, and he will know that British Rail was worried, and that the counsel for the Cockburn association and other organisations, James Clyde, made the valid point that the inquiry should have given more consideration to the railway realignment than anything else, because that was the reason the order was introduced. Does he agree that little consideration was given to the railways, and that this was wrong?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: If British Rail were seriously anxious about this matter, I should have expected it to get in touch with me at some stage to voice that concern. It has not. I appreciate that the parliamentary commission was not unanimous, in that the decision was reached by three to one; but the overwhelming majority came to the view——

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I must proceed.

Mr. Martin *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Members will be getting their chance later and can develop their points then. I have much to say.

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Martin *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot have three hon. Members on their feet at the same time.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As I said, the consultant——

Mr. Martin *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall not give way.

Mr. Martin: Is the hon. Gentleman afraid to give way?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The preposterous suggestion has been made by those appearing on behalf of the Edinburgh district council that the two roads worst affected by traffic congestion would be improved, in the sense of making it easier for traffic to drive through the communities concerned. Far from relieving the communities of the traffic with which they are desperately overloaded, this would further expose them to even more intolerable pressures.

Then there was the "wait for the outer-city bypass" school of thought. The consultants declined to test this, and the studies that they completed revealed that, while

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there would be some relief in Corstorphine, the position would be much worse in Gorgie-Dalry. They foresaw that there would be more pressure to increase the capacity of the two radial routes, as an alternative to the western relief road. This additional capacity could be obtained only at the expense of the local community, whose members live, work, shop and go to school in those areas, by giving priority to traffic over them. They also saw that traffic using the main radial routes will continue to grow because of the increased levels of car ownership and because there are proposed developments on the western side of Edinburgh. Here, their words were strangely prophetic.

I have here the *District Council News*, which is produced on behalf of the Labour administration on the Edinburgh district council. It says that the Labour group is proposing a £100 million investment in the west of the city. It just so happens that this investment is perched at the western end of the proposed relief road in my constituency. The article says that the project, involving

> "200 acres of land at South Gyle will create a high technology park and a district shopping centre as well as several hundred houses. It is a joint development by Marks and Spencer, Associated Dairies, Wimpey Homes, with the cooperation and participation of the City of Edinburgh District Council."

The proposed shopping centre extends to 400,000 sq ft. This is larger than any shopping centre now in existence in Scotland. As well as that, 40 acres will be developed for housing with 123 acres as a high technology park in the green belt.

This application has been called in by the regional council, and if it is approved, 30,000 extra units of traffic will be using the roads every day. I do not need to tell the House that the effect of those proposals on west Edinburgh would be a permanent traffic jam of hideous proportions. The plans of Edinburgh district council, if implemented without amendment, would condemn thousands of my constituents to live in circumstances of frustration and degradation. Their lives would be adversely affected by the permanent traffic jam on their doorsteps.

The present environmental capacity of St. Johns road is 6,000, the existing traffic is nearly 24,000 and the bypass would reduce the figure marginally to 19,000. If these proposals go ahead without a relief road, there will be 30,000 extra units, and life will become intolerable, not only in Corstorphine but, even more so, in Gorgie-Dalry, where the traffic will, in any case, grow when the outer-city bypass opens. The environmental capacity of Gorgie road is 6,000 a day and more than 10,000 cars now use it. When the outer-city bypass opens, that number will increase to 15,000.

The Socialists on Edinburgh district council simply cannot have it both ways. They cannot say, "Yes, we want that £100 million development, but we do not want the western relief road." The mammoth developments that they propose——

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston) *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment, because I know that he has a constituency interest. The mammoth developments proposed will be unacceptable, and if the council imposes them, they will bring misery and unbearable environmental conditions for my constituents.

Mr. Cook: I shall be gentle with the hon. Gentleman, because as he is aware, our views on the proposed development concur. The difficulty that he foresees will be avoided if Lothian regional council sticks by its strategic plan and recognises Livingston as the major shopping centre for the area. However, is not the hon. Gentleman also trying to have it both ways? He is supporting the road, but, as I understand it, is not in favour of the development.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Before expressing a hard view on a £100 million development, which has many different facets, I shall take the views of my constituents into account. I have done that with the relief road, because many meetings have taken place, so I am aware of their concern. However, there is much concern about this proposed development because shopping patterns will be wiped out of existence and the changes will be far-reaching.

The hon. Gentleman expressed reservations about that £100 million development, but I know of no such reservations from the Edinburgh district council, which has published the article to which I refer, and which I can let him have if he would like it. If massive developments are proposed, with them there should be the improved environmental conditions that make life tolerable for those who live nearby and round about.

An exhibition was organised about the western relief road from 19 July to 3 September 1983. Some 40,000 households received leaflets explaining what the relief road would do. More than 3,000 persons visited the exhibition and the representations in writing that the consultants received showed that a decisive majority wanted the relief road to go through. During this process, I attended the meeting, and I and others urged the consultants to make changes.

An important one was the move to safeguard as much as possible the employment of those who work at Westfield. The consultants listened to the representations and substituted a viaduct through the Westfield area to minimise the impact on businesses in that area. It was made clear that the design standards are virtually the lowest for a dual carriageway road, the speed limit over much of that road being 40 miles an hour. The line of route takes amenity interests into account.

For the most part, the route will occupy vacant ground or utilise former railway land. Most of the route runs alongside the Edinburgh-Glasgow railway line. At one point, as mentioned, where the route would conflict with housing, the railway is diverted. The diversion of the railway, the construction of the viaduct and the presence of undeveloped or derelict land allows the whole project to proceed with the demolition of only one house. A satisfactory arrangement has been made with the householder concerned.

Although road proposals involve the loss of open space, allotments and part of the golf course, the regional council has agreed to relocate those facilities and there will be extensive landscaping. The facilities affected by the relief road will be replaced or improved.

There are safeguards in the Bill for allotment holders and there is a smaller loss of land, as was mentioned earlier, in relation to Carrick Knowe municipal golf course. The region has employed a golf course architect

who has prepared a design for remodelling the course on an 18-hole, par 70, basis of greater interest than the present course. That is covered by clause 35.

On Second Reading, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East spoke about the importance of open space, although the same arguments apply to Portobello bypass in his constituency. That bypass, in the course of construction, which starts at Musselburgh and goes on to Portobello, goes through a disused coal mine, small shops and car parking adjacent to Asda, through allotments, through a garage and car showrooms, through former rail land, rail workshops, and wasteland, and will pass on an embankment behind houses in Portobello. In some ways, that bypass is even more intrusive than the western relief road, yet the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East is only too happy to support a relief road for his constituency.

Some of the land on which the western relief road will run has been used as an informal recreation area and in places it has been used for dumping. The land has always been reserved for a major motorway and the road does not take it all. The road proposed is not a motorway. It is proposed to lay out a football pitch on some of the remaining land as well as to relocate and landscape a children's play area. Amenity and recreational interests have been taken into account.

I should like to examine the procedures involved in this matter. The regional council used the procedure of a parliamentary commission. As it turned out, that has allowed a wider debate than would otherwise have occurred. The parliamentary commission was the longest which has ever sat and was chosen for three reasons. First, the region could be faced with three planning inquiries: on the planning aspects of the road; on land acquisition apart from the rail diversion; and on rail diversion and associated land acquisition. Secondly, the procedure allowed a guaranateed hearing into the whole proposal. Thirdly, it allowed for a rather wider range of compensation than would normally have been available. Some 39 amenity groups banded together for the inquiry. Witnesses from the smaller groups said that they had received a fair hearing.

A number of arguments were put forward at the commission by the district council, the Cockburn association and the Balgreen, Stenhouse and Whitson action group. They argued that the new road would increase city centre traffic. Extensive analysis demonstrated that the redistribution of existing traffic caused by the relief road would not have a significant effect on the city centre. The consultants' view was that there was no evidence that the modest scheme proposed would significantly alter the number of journeys——

Mr. Foulkes: What is the purpose of the relief road, then?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The purpose of the road is to remove cars from a highly congested shopping centre, where there is considerable danger to the lives and welfare of children and those who live there and to remove those cars to a purpose-built road where they will not pose the threat that they now do.

Mr. Foulkes: On that particular point, which is crucial, will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Other hon. Members want to speak, and I want to develop my point.

Lothian region intends to maintain a limit upon parking. That is an important factor which——

Mr. Foulkes: Will the hon. Member give way?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This will be the last occasion that I will give way.

Mr. Foulkes: This is a crucial point. The hon. Gentleman's whole central point is that the Saughton road and the Gorgie-Dalry road traffic will all go on to the new relief road. The hon. Gentleman ought to know from his experience that as soon as traffic goes on to that relief road more traffic will come in to the Corstorphine road and the Gorgie-Dalry roads, as those roads are at present relatively empty. More traffic will come into the city centre, thus making the constituency of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) more congested.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that point, because he is fundamentally wrong. People come into the city centre only if they have the time and the money to do so. Whether the relief road is built or not will have no effect on the time or money of those who wish to travel to the city centre. The effect of the road is merely to redistribute traffic which already exists.

The road will not have the effects that the hon. Gentleman fears. If the hon. Member does not believe me, he should look at the big road into the heart of Sheffield, which has not increased traffic in that city centre. It has not had that feared and dreaded effect. Much of what the hon. Gentleman is saying represents a fear of the unknown. I am certain that the experts who produced the evidence know what they are talking about.

There are five points of relief where traffic will be redistributed into the city centre: the Roseburn spur, Dundee street, Haymarket spur, Canning street and Lothian road. It must be remembered that with the parking facilities at the end of the road, it allows an opportunity for cars to get out of Edinburgh speedily without congesting the roads which we are concerned about.

I shall give a piece of evidence to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, who is reluctant to accept what I am saying. When parts of the western approach road were opened, before and after studies showed that there was a drop in peak traffic on Lothian road. It was contended that more effective use of public transport with the outer-city bypass would make that road unnecessary. More effective public transport would be at the cost of demolishing houses and properties alongside the route and it has been identified that some properties would have to be destroyed in the Chesser. That would be totally unacceptable to those concerned.

The region has proposed rail improvements. With park-and-ride schemes, it has built a new railway station at Livingston and a station has been opened at South Gyle. Further stations will be opened on the Bathgate line, at Currie and at Wester Nailes. While these will help, they are not a substitute for the relief road. The parliamentary commission, as the House knows, decided by a majority to support the road project. The matter should be considered by the Joint Committee on the basis that justice should not only be done but seen to be done. Serious allegations have been made in the petitions which have been lodged before the House.

We are entitled to express gratitude to the two hon. Members who served on the parliamentary commission

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—the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) and the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst)—and to those hon. Members who served on the Joint Committee. Two of those hon. Members gave up three and a half months of their time and the other two gave up nearly seven weeks. That represents a considerable sacrifice, to make certain that the matter should be properly considered.

At almost the same time that the Joint Committee reported, the Secretary of State gave the go-ahead for the building of the multi-storey car park. That development will help speed up the construction of the international conference centre nearby and the development of a financial and banking centre. The car park is an important move in easing the city's severe parking problems by siphoning off several thousand cars.

I believe that the centre of the city is catered for in five different ways. First, the multi-storey car park will make a substantial difference. Secondly, the council's parking control methods should discourage long-stay parking. Thirdly, the railway halts providing park-and-ride facilities will encourage commuters to leave their cars outside the city. Fourthly, the traffic lights control system and the traffic management measures will operate to redistribute traffic as required when the relief road is built. Fifthly, the outer city bypass will take out of circulation in the city centre traffic which can use a bypass to the city.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) referred to expenses for the objectors. I am sympathetic with the determined line he has pursued on their behalf, not least because I am a life member of the Cockburn association and the National Trust. I shall not go into the detail of the legal complexities, but I believe that, as a matter of general principle, the amenity groups should be entitled to participate in massive planning inquiries without sustaining punitive costs with no hope of reimbursement. The points they raised were fully considered. Although the parliamentary commissioners and the Joint Committee rejected their line of argument, it was right that they should be heard, because they voiced the concern of some of their members.

Although the costs of the regional council and the district council are matters for those authorities respectively, I believe that the costs of the Cockburn association should be viewed sympathetically by the regional council because the issues needed full consideration before a decision could be reached. I believe that generosity by the region would not be a great sacrifice by ratepayers. I believe that such payment is desirable and necessary, whatever the legal technicalities may be.

From where does the opposition to the relief road come? I have heard a rumour that it emanates from the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East. That is remarkable, because the hon. Gentleman is benefiting from the Portobello bypass, which is a relief road through his constituency. The objective of that bypass was to remove traffic from shopping and residential areas where the traffic volume was approximately half the traffic volume in the west of the city. The only difference between the hon. Gentleman's constituency and mine is that the need for relief is far greater in west Edinburgh because the traffic volume is infinitely greater than in east Edinburgh.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East, tries to deny to my constituents benefits for which he has fought on behalf of his constituents. He supports a relief road for east Edinburgh, not for west Edinburgh. However, the hon. Gentleman's colleagues on Edinburgh district council, and perhaps the hon. Gentleman himself, are promoting a £100 million development in west Edinburgh. If development is to take place in the west, there must be roads with it to make life tolerable.

Traffic congestion in the western sector is totally unsatisfactory. Relief is vital for the areas where traffic is desperately overloaded. I hope that priority will be given to the local communities because, if the traffic is speeding, it can only be at their expense. None of the no-road options benefited those concerned. I strongly recommend the legislation.

The Bill is in the interests not only of my constituents but of Scotland. The environmental improvements, the accident reductions, the saving of lives and the benefits to public transport are all obvious, but the contribution of the western relief road to Scotland's economic well-being cannot be too strongly stressed. The people of Edinburgh make a great contribution to Scotland and to the United Kingdom as a whole. Edinburgh is one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Its educational system is second to none. Its banking, finance, insurance and commercial activities have a worldwide reputation. I believe that Edinburgh is well on the road to becoming the second financial centre of Europe after London.

The developments proposed by the Scottish Development Agency and the conference centre will establish a high-grade office development for financial institutions. At one end of the road is this proposed £100 million development; at the other end is the proposed development of a financial centre. Each proposed development will have the maximum impact only if there is a relief road. I have reservations about Edinburgh district council's proposal. However, I believe that it is essential to have this legislation because it stands for progress. It is essential for Edinburgh and Scotland.

7.54 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I mean no offence to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), but I think that it was unfair of him, knowing that many hon. Members wanted to put their case, to take so long. The Conservative party's interest in Edinburgh was shown by the fact that only one Conservative Member was willing to speak. The hon. Gentleman had to keep the debate going until his colleagues——

Mr. Robin Cook: There are only four of them.

Mr. Martin: —managed to finish their meal at the Harcourt Grill. That was very sad. It does not say much for the Conservative party's attitude to Edinburgh.

I do not believe that we should discuss Edinburgh's planning requirements at this stage. Three and a half months should not have been spent in Edinburgh, away from the business of Parliament, dealing with this matter. I do not believe that the issue should have been dealt with by a Joint Committee. The House has created legislation allowing local authorities to take up these matters through planning inquiries. If local authorities felt that planning inquiries would not give objectors and supporters alike a proper voice, they should have made representations to the

House long ago. It is ridiculous to say that a parliamentary inquiry was needed because it would give ordinary people in Edinburgh the opportunity to state their case.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, West confounded that argument when he told us that the Joint Committee rejected the proposal to cover the expenses of those who were good enough to make known their objections. The objectors reacted responsibly by creating an umbrella group of all objectors and allowing the Cockburn association to represent them, to appoint Queen's counsel and to make legal representation. It is wrong to say that this type of procedure makes things easy for the objectors. I believe that it makes it more difficult.

Anyone who spent any time at the Edinburgh inquiry would have seen that it was not easy for members of the public to make representations. They had to appear before six Queen's counsel and their juniors. I do not believe that it would have been easy for anyone to petition against the Bill.

The Government have a large majority. If they had had a very small majority, would they have allowed two Members of Parliament to go to Edinburgh?

Mr. Henderson: It would have depended on who they were.

Mr. Martin: The hon. Gentleman will know that the group must consist of an Opposition Member and a Government Member. If there were a Government with a small majority, a local authority opposed to the Government of the day could manipulate the parliamentary order and get people to object to it. The Government would be obliged to set up a parliamentary commission in Scotland. That would not be allowed. I am sure that the Leader of the House would bring about a change in legislation very rapidly.

As the only person who can represent constituents in Glasgow, Springburn, it is a scandal that I was taken away from the business of the House. I had a major redundancy declared in my constituency while the parliamentary inquiry was going on, and I was unable to come here to make representations on behalf of all the work force in the only major industry left in my constituency. That is not right. I do not mind the House taking a decision that I have to be elsewhere, but I take exception to a local authority making that decision when it had the power to go to a planning inquiry.

We were in Edinburgh to consider legislation. That is as it was explained to us by the two competent clerks, who were both qualified Queen's counsel. I think that Mr. Gavin Douglas is the Secretary of State for Scotland's legal adviser. We were advised from the outset, as parliamentary commissioners, that our main object was to look at the legislation to see whether it was properly worded and to make sure that it was not defective. We had to ensure that it would allow British Rail to divert the railway in such a way that no claim could be made against it, and that it was complying with the Railway Acts.

A submission was made at the early stages of the inquiry by James Clyde, now Lord James Clyde, a High Court Judge. His case was that we should throw out the order because there were other means at the disposal of the local authority and it should go back and prepare an order that consisted only of diverting the railway. Listening to the evidence, it was my view, and that of the legal advisers, that had that been done it would have taken only weeks to get the thing through. We would not, as a result, be having this discussion tonight and valuable parliamentary time would not have been taken up. All that we would have discussed was the diversion of the railway. Evidence was led to the effect that to proceed with such a major road development by parliamentary order was unprecedented. No evidence was put forwarded that could stand up to scrutiny to show that such a development had ever been put through by way of parliamentary order.

It does not matter what the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West says about a dual carriageway—there are dual carriageways and dual carriageways. I live on a dual carriageway—Wallacewell road and Balornock. I invite the hon. Gentleman to come and see it. It bears absolutely no resemblance to this proposal. What we have before us is a proposal for a motorway without a hard shoulder. It is the equivalent of the Clydeside expressway, which is a lot different from the Wallacewell road.

Evidence was led by the proposer of the Bill, the regional authority, that what we are talking about is something similar to the Clydeside expressway. This is a motorway in every sense of the word except that it does not have a hard shoulder. No one in his right mind would attempt to cross the expressway on foot, because the traffic is so heavy. Indeed, the local authority has built bridges over it. There was never any parliamentary order to deal with that proposal, and the hon. Gentleman knows it.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, West says that we on the Labour Benches have a fear of the unknown. I think that I know as much about motorway proposals as any hon. Member. I lived in a community known as Anderston, where the Clydeside expressway is. That was a tight-knit community. There was a good strong community spirit which must exist in Corstorphine and other parts of Edinburgh. The Clydeside expressway cut across several streets in that community, with the result that the population in the Anderston district of Glasgow is less than a third of what it used to be in the 1950s, when I lived there as a boy. It did not help things when they put a motorway through the centre of Glasgow and pushed all the population to the outlying areas. Even though some people have moved away from their old districts, and have been away for over 30 years, they still come to Members of Parliament and councillors in Glasgow saying, "I want to go back to the old area that I used to belong to."

Mr. Henderson: Can the hon. Gentleman tell me the political complexion of the authority that allowed that development to go ahead? Can he honestly put his hand on his heart and say that the opportunities for the objectors from Anderston were any greater than were the opportunities for the objectors to this scheme? Is it not the case with this proposal that only one house is to be taken away, which was not the case in Anderston?

Mr. Martin: There were not many people in Anderston who could afford a QC and a junior to help them at a parliamentary inquiry. My point is that lessons should be learnt from Glasgow. We have deplorable housing in Glasgow, and many people said that these motorways would be the answer to all our problems, because the roads would bring more industry and relieve traffic. There are still parts of Glasgow where the traffic is very heavy. What is the answer?

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, West talked about experts. The experts, who were outside the city, told those

[Mr. Martin]

of us who live in Glasgow what we should be doing and what was good for us. Some of them stay in Edinburgh. The experts kept telling us that we needed more motorways. They had a plan to put a motorway through my area to bypass the district of Stepps. They plan to put a motorway from the end of Glasgow to link up with the M8. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should take that into consideration. There will be more traffic brought on to the M8 and more traffic going on to the very road that he is proposing.

Even though these ideas about motorways in Glasgow came up in the early 1960s, and all the citizens were shown drawings and working models of what the place would look like, we still have many problems. These have been thrown up because the experts told us that this would be good for us. I say to the hon. Gentleman and the people of Edinburgh that they should not think that the only thing they will get is this relief road. Some other expert will come along and suggest adding another mile or two—"Why not do something else? Why not have a ring road?" The strange thing is that all that traffic on the relief road stops at the city centre. Therefore, someone will come up with the bright idea that it does not work, just as they came up with the bright idea in the 1980s, that despite all the motorway building more motorways were needed.

The upheaval in Glasgow has been scandalous. In Springburn, where I live, there were excellent properties which the experts told us would not be pulled down, yet the planning blight was so bad that they fell down. People pleaded with the authorities to pull buildings down. It is all right for the hon. Gentleman to say that not one building will be touched, but let us not kid ourselves. We have only to look at what happened in Glasgow and the problems of planning blight there. There is more noise than people expected. Communities are divided. People cannot get to the parks or schools. The lead from the petrol, the fumes and so on have eroded the quality of life. All those problems exist in Glasgow, not just in Anderston, but in Cowcaddens and the Gorbals.

The main problems, which were touched on by the hon. Gentleman, were the planning considerations. One of the justifications for motorways in Glasgow was that they would bring more industry to the city. If motorways bring industries to cities, Glasgow should be a boom town instead of having the worst unemployment problems in Europe. Therefore, that argument is confounded.

The parliamentary inquiry threw up another problem. Each and every one of us on that inquiry had no legal training——

Mr. Robin Cook: That may have been an advantage.

Mr. Martin: That may be, but we depended on the advice of Queen's counsel to the Secretary of State, who acted as our clerks. Let me put on record that they were excellent people to work with. I did not envy them their task. Like myself, they had other jobs to do, yet they worked hard to make sure that we were given every facility. On every occasion we received not just legal advice, but strong legal advice, that the legislation before us was defective. That advice was cast aside by the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst), who I regret is not in the Chamber, and the two other parliamentary inquiries. The advice of the best legal brains in Edinburgh was thrown aside like a rusty nail.

It was not known at the time, but that was why the first motion to be put before the commissioners after all the proceedings was mine, saying that in view of strong legal advice we should reject the parliamentary order. Needless to say, it was 3:1 against. However, I felt so strongly about the matter that it had to be put on the record. I mention it today because the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West said that there was a strong majority against. I remind the hon. Gentleman that two independent Queen's counsel advised us that we should have rejected the order.

The hon. Gentleman does not take into consideration the fact that after the order was approved in Edinburgh, against my wishes, the representatives of British Rail came to the House to seek amendments to that parliamentary order. Therefore, the parliamentary order that was put before to us in Edinburgh was different from that which was put before hon. Members in the Joint Committee and the Members of the House of Lords.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Sharp practice.

Mr. Martin: I do not know whether it was sharp practice. I merely make the point that the amendments were made and it would be erroneous to suggest that what was agreed in Edinburgh was the same as what was being considered at the Joint Committee.

When the people who represented the opposers—the petitioners against—came before the commissioners, in some cases those who were giving evidence were treated rather high-handedly. It is on record, because there was a transcript of every day's proceedings. Some people who represented voluntary organisations gave evidence and some commissioners gave the impression that they had already made up their minds before they had heard them. There is no need to take my word for it, because the transcript shows that on a number of occasions I had to interject and ask commissioners not to treat witnesses in such a manner. Certainly it was my opinion that some commissioners had made up their minds before they had heard all the evidence.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): Scurrilous.

Mr. Martin: That is true. I am certainly not referring to myself. Anyone who was there and heard the way that some witnesses were being ridiculed by the commissioners would have gained the impression that the commissioners had made up their minds.

Mr. McQuarrie: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for having to leave, but I am expecting an important telephone call. Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the people who had made up their minds were Members of the House, or were they independent members of the panel? There were two independent members of the panel and two Members of the House. Is he suggesting that Members of the House had prejudged the commission's inquiries?

Mr. Martin: There was a report in *The Scotsman* in which it was mentioned that the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden had said to Mr. Oliver Barrett, a member of the Cockburn Association, during a tea break or lunch break in St. Giles restaurant, "You will get your road whether you like it or not."

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that he is making a serious allegation, which is strongly disputed and rejected?

Mr. Martin: That is not an allegation that I am making against the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden. That was the report in *The Scotsman*, which is a reputable newspaper, and it has not been retracted. I say only that there is a record to that effect. If the hon. Gentleman comes to the Chamber he will be able to put the matter right, but that was the allegation as it appeared in print, and I have seen no record of its being withdrawn.

Mr. Robin Cook: As Mr. Oliver Barrett is present in the Palace, would it not be a satisfactory way of disposing of this to summon him to the Bar to confirm what has been said?

Mr. Martin: I am not an expert on the procedure for getting members of the public to the Bar. However, at least Mr. Barrett would be able to set the record straight, as would the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman has not produced the article from *The Scotsman*. My recollection of that article is that it did not mention Oliver Barrett quoting the hon. Member whom he has suggested. If the hon. Gentleman can produce the article, it might help us.

Mr. Martin: I can only go on my recollection, but I certainly remember Mr. Oliver Barrett's name being mentioned. If I am wrong, I will withdraw the name of Mr. Oliver Barrett.

It is on record that members of the public who opposed the order were not treated in a way in which members of the public opposing an order should be treated. I had to interject on a number of occasions because of that. In fact, in his summing-up, Lord James Clyde asked the commissioners to remember that because they were dealing with voluntary organisations they should not treat them as cranks. I think he was giving a hint that that was the way in which they had been treated.

The other two commissioners did their job, and they did their best under the circumstances. However, some criticism should be levelled at the other place. I mean this as constructive criticism. It is my firm belief that, had there been other parliamentary commissioners from the other place, the order would not have had the stormy passage that it received. As I said, we were dealing with parliamentary legislation. If we had had two commissioners from the other place, we would have had people who had foremost in their minds the fact that parliamentary legislation is more important than anything else, and that would have been a primary consideration. Instead of that, we heard more evidence about the road than about the order, which is what we were there to look at.

On a motion, which I think was moved by the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden, we said that we would leave aside Lord James Clyde's motion on whether Lothian should go back and prepare an order which included only the railway. In other words, we decided to leave it until we had some more evidence. That motion was carried, but we went on to hear all the evidence. Therefore, we did not even carry out the terms of the motion that we passed.

I have had differences of opinion with Lothian regional council about the road, and I made my views known to it in as fair a way as I could at the time. However, I want to put on record the fact that Lothian regional council was responsible for looking after the parliamentary commissioners and that it did so in an excellent way. It looked after our needs for refreshments and coffee, which is important when one is conducting an inquiry over a period of three and a half months.

We had telephone facilities so that we could contact our secretaries, and we had typing facilities. The council looked after us in every way and answered our every request. Therefore, in spite of the fact that I was away from the House for three and a half months I made many friends in Edinburgh and on the Lothian regional council. I did not make friends just with Members of the Labour party, as the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) suggests. The hon. Gentleman knows that we had an excellent relationship with officials and elected Members from the Conservative party.

Although I have been in Edinburgh many times, I was impressed when I travelled up to the Mound, which is where the Lothian regional council buildings are, and where people live in the centre of Edinburgh. Old tenemental buildings which have been refurbished are to be seen cheek by jowl with some of the historic buildings of Edinburgh. Human beings live in Edinburgh after the office workers have left and the business is finished for the day.

That is what I remember about Glasgow as a boy before the motorways took over. Not only Glasgow but many other places are spending millions to get the population back into the city centre. I say to the people of Edinburgh and to hon. Members who represent Edinburgh that they should watch roadway proposals very carefully. Edinburgh has something worth cherishing, and it should be guarded, because if it is not the people of Edinburgh could lose one of their finest assets.

8.26 pm

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on this Bill because I served as one of the Members of this House on the Joint Committee.

I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) has very lucidly set out the need for the Bill. As he said, it has been promoted by the Lothian regional council, and the main objectives of the order are set out in a statement issued by the promoters. The order was

> "(1) to authorise the council to construct a new road in the western sector of the city of Edinburgh which will bypass, and thereby relieve, residential and shopping areas suffering from traffic congestion;
>
> (2) to divert a portion of the Edinburgh/Glasgow railway line in order to make room for the new road without demolishing a large number of local authority dwellings; and
>
> (3) to acquire land for the above-mentioned purposes."

It was pointed out in the statement that the road would be approximately four miles in length. It would not be a motorway and would not form a part of the motorway network for the city, it would be a dual carriageway with low design criteria and its junctions would be roundabouts or controlled traffic lights. The statement also pointed out that the areas to be bypassed by the road were Corstorphine, Murrayfield, Roseburn, Sighthill, Stenhouse, Gorgie and Dalry and that those areas currently suffer from traffic congestion on the two main roads connecting central Edinburgh with central and western

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Scotland. It also pointed out that over 80,000 people live in those areas and an even greater number rely on them for shopping or local services.

The statement said that the road would divert over 30,000 vehicles each day from existing congested roads and would give further opportunity to reduce the traffic problems by management and traffic restraint measures which would be impossible without a new road.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West said that the road would not generate new traffic because of the existing traffic restraint policy in the city. I think that he made that clear during his discussions. As the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) said, the inquiry in Edinburgh lasted for 52 sitting days. The nature of the inquiry was certainly much broader than had been anticipated, as we heard from the comments made by the hon. Member for Springburn on Second Reading on 4 December. The hon. Gentleman went on to say that the commissioners had heard full and lengthy arguments for and against the road and found, by a majority, that the preamble to the order was proved. Therefore it came to the House.

On 4 December 1985 the Bill received its Second Reading. A number of hon. Members spoke during that debate. Much play was made of the fact that, if Conservative Members who were promoting the Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill would be prepared to refer it to a Joint Committee of both Houses, it would be looked upon with favour. It is worth drawing attention to what was said by those hon. Members who took part in the debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) moved a motion, that Mr. Speaker felt inclined to accept, that the Bill should be committed to a Joint Committee of both Houses. That provided my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central with the opportunity to put his case for referral to a Joint Committee. That is to be found in column 354 of the *Official Report* of 4 December 1985.

In column 364 of the *Official Report*, my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central said:

"I note what my hon. Friend said about the motion that I have on the Order Paper that the Bill should be committed to a Joint Committee of both Houses. I do not propose to enlarge upon that. If that were the decision of the House, it would allow further discussion on some of these matters."

The hon. Member for Springburn who, as he has just told us, was the chairman of the commission, agreed that a Joint Committee of both Houses should consider the matter. In column 367 of the *Official Report* he said:

"I am glad the hon. Gentleman accepts that a Joint Committee of both Houses should consider this matter."

Mr. Martin: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that the reason that I asked for the matter to be looked at by a Joint Committee was in the context that hon. Members should not be taken away from the House for a long period? Does he agree that the Joint Committee agreed that this procedure should be reviewed in the light of what has happened?

Mr. McQuarrie: According to the *Official Report*, the hon. Gentleman did not make it clear that hon. Members should not be taken away from the House. To be fair to him, further down column 367 he said:

"I could not come to the House for three and a half months".

That is the point that the hon. Gentleman was trying to make. However, he admitted that he was glad that a Joint Committee of both Houses would consider the matter.

On the Opposition Front Bench on that occasion was the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton). In column 371 of the *Official Report* he said:

"However, if the Bill is passed, I warmly welcome the disclosure that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West is prepared to accept the procedure of a Joint Committee of both Houses because at least that will allow the matter to be considered in more detail before the proposal is passed. Therefore, I ask my hon. Friends to weigh their decision carefully before they cast their votes."—[*Official Report*, 4 December 1985, Vol. 88, c. 364-71.]

There were also petitions to the House, including the humble petition of Edinburgh district council. It set out why the Bill should not receive a Second Reading. I shall not weary the House with the petition. A great deal was said about it during the debate on 4 December 1985. However, I wish to refer to page 7 of the petition, which says:

"Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that your Hon. House may see fit to refer the confirming Bill to a Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament and that the Order may not be allowed to pass into law and that they may be heard by themselves, their Counsel, Agents and witnesses in support of the allegations of this Petition against the Preamble to the Order".

My point is that Edinburgh district council also supported the setting up of a Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament.

There was another set of objectors. There were 38 of them, including the Cockburn association. It prayed along similar lines to the prayer of the Edinburgh district council. Page 5 of the petition says:

"Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that your Hon. House may see fit to refer the confirming Bill to a Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament"—

[Interruption.] The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) was a member of the Lothian regional council. It is a pity that he was not a baillie. If he had been a baillie, he might have hanged himself with a chain—or perhaps it is fortunate that he did not, or we should have missed his windbagging from a sedentary position. However, he will not turn me from the point that I want to make.

In its wisdom, the House decided on 4 December to refer the Bill to a Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament. In due course, a Joint Committee was set up. It included three hon. Members from this House and three Members from the other place. It sat for just over six weeks and listened to the presentation of cases from eminent counsel, professors, specialists, consultants and ordinary witnesses who put their views for and against the road. It heard representatives of Edinburgh district council. I resent the imputation of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley that no consideration was given to the matter.

The hon. Member for Springburn referred to *The Scotsman*. On 20 January 1986, under the heading "Row over choice of relief road 'jury'", it said:

"The all-party parliamentary committee which is to provide the next hurdle for the Edinburgh Western Relief Road Confirmation Bill has been selected on a blatantly political basis, road objectors of all parties said yesterday."

It then referred to those who would possibly sit on Joint Committee.

Lord Ferrier was quoted as saying that he intended to appear before the Joint Committee and speak against the Bill in the House of Lords. He said of the appointments,

although they had not been made at that time, that they were nonsense and that he was going to complain to the Clerk of the Private Bill Office and ask what was going on. He said:

"I think we are being taken for a ride."

I challenged Lord Ferrier during the Joint Committee proceedings. He said that he did not remember saying that to *The Scotsman*. He could not remember what he had said. I am not surprised, because he told us about his road building experiences in India.

That shows, however, that there was some bias in the press against the Joint Committee. The implication was that it would not do its job properly. I resent that implication. Had those who made these assertions been present during the Joint Committee deliberations, they would have found that we listened attentively to the cross-questioning of the witnesses.

We wanted to ascertain whether or not this western link road was essential.

One of the comments made by the noble Lord was to the effect that hon. Members of the Commons who were sitting on the Joint Committee should not have voted for the referral which Mr. Speaker in his wisdom joined to the Second Reading. I put it to the noble Lord and to the Committee that a Member of this House is considered to be an hon. Member and if an hon. Member is appointed to any Committee he must go in with a totally unbiased view.

The hon. Member for Springburn has left the Chamber, probably to go down to the Harcourt Room, a place to which he accused several of my hon. Friends of going. I am sorry he is not here to listen to what I have to say. He made an absolutely scurrilous attack upon my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst). That was an attack by imputation, because my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden was the only Member of this House who was present at that inquiry.

If the hon. Member for Springburn was suggesting that an hon. Member made up his mind before the objectors were heard, the only Member he could have been referring to was my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden. Knowing my hon. Friend as I do, I know he would not stoop to the sort of thing suggested by the hon. Member for Springburn. I resent the fact that the hon. Member for Springburn should act in such a way towards another hon. Member.

In the Joint Committee we studied the situation and listened attentively to the people who appeared before us. The inquiry in Edinburgh took three months and the people who were heard in Edinburgh were also heard—or their representatives, because all 38 people from the Cockburn association did not come here — by the Select Committee. All the professionals and consultants were heard and the paper filled a corner of the House of Commons Committee Room. We received miles of paper in the course of our deliberations. It was virtually a re-run of what took place in Edinburgh. Then there was a semi re-run of it down here.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) is the only one who did not mention referring the Bill to the Joint Committee, because his speech was interrupted by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West moving the closure. We do not know whether my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East supported the referral or whether he would have gone against it. That may be in his favour or against him. I am worried about the massive expense of the inquiry to the ratepayers of Lothian and Edinburgh and the taxpayers in general.

The Bill then came down to the House for a Second Reading to which all Members agreed and sent it to the Joint Committee. The Joint Committee considered it over a period of six weeks at considerable expense; and now the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East objects to it. I am not suggesting that the hon. Member did anything irregular, but the will of this House was to refer it to the Joint Committee and Opposition Members said they were glad they would be given an opportunity to be seriously heard. They are doubting the integrity of the members of that Joint Committee of both Houses. That is a sad reflection of the Opposition. It is certainly no reflection on the members of the Joint Committee, who worked extremely hard. They were drawn from all parties and were not just Conservatives.

Mr. Maxton: Was it a unanimous report?

Mr. McQuarrie: It is not for me to tell the House whether it was or not. The deliberations of the Committee were in private. When the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn told the House something of the deliberations of the Committee, I did not bother to intervene and let him know the position because he should have known himself that deliberations are in private. Although leaks happen from time to time, they may be informed or ill informed. It is not for me to say whether there was a majority of one, two, three or four, or whether it was a unanimous decision.

Mr. Foulkes: We all know.

Mr. McQuarrie: The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, in his usual magician's way, thinks he knows the answer, but he knows very little about it.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): The hon. Gentleman talked about expense. Could he enlighten the House about who paid for the junket in Locket's restaurant to which hon. Members were invited by Tory councillor Brian Meeke to try to persuade them to vote for this road?

Mr. McQuarrie: I would not have said it was a junket. It was an informal presentation. I am sure hon. Members on both sides of the House go to informal presentations. It was not a junket.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. We are debating the Third Reading of the Bill, and hon. Members ought to get back to it.

Mr. McQuarrie: I trust I was not straying from the debate. I was merely trying to answer the question by the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan). However, I shall return to the debate. The Joint Committee ultimately reached a decision and found the preamble proved.

Mr. Maxton: It was not unanimous.

Mr. McQuarrie: It is all very well for the hon. Member for Cathcart to say from his sedentary position that it was not unanimous. That is for the hon. Member to speculate. There was nothing printed in the report to say whether or not it was unanimous. Someone might have said that there was a majority, but it is up to the Committee to decide. I will not be forced to digress from my speech,

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because that is what the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley was trying to do to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West.

Having found the preamble proved, the Committee then had representations by opponents to the scheme. These were duly considered by the Committee and a decision made about them. Now the Bill has returned to the House.

Before I leave the matter of the deliberations of the Joint Committee, I should like to refer to what my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West said about expenses. As we know, in their wisdom the commissioners inserted into the Bill a provision that the Cockburn association objectors should be paid two thirds of their expenses. There seemed to be some difficulty about paying those expenses. First of all, Lothian regional council decided that, as the matter had been referred to the Joint Committee, it was still sub judice and the council could not pay the expenses at that time. There was a plea to the effect that, while two thirds of the expenses of the Edinburgh inquiry would be paid, there was to be no money to pay the Cockburn association expenses for the parliamentary inquiry through the Joint Committee. On that point I sympathise with the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West.

As my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) said, the Joint Committee deliberated upon that and found there was no legal way that the Committee could reach a decision on the expenses to be awarded to the appellants. It is fair to say that there was merit in the case made by the objectors for some payment of the expenses they had incurred. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West, I hope that Lothian regional council will look at this matter sympathetically and see what can be done.

I disagree with what the hon. Member for Springburn, said about an ordinary person not having an opportunity to present himself at the public inquiry. That point was raised by hon. Members during the deliberations of the Joint Committee and it was clear that any ordinary person could have appeared at the public inquiry and made his case.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West referred to the fact that the Transport and General Workers Union had sent a letter asking for support for the passage of the western relief road Bill. My hon. Friend referred to the 1,500 jobs that would be created. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley said in an intervention that many roads could be built anywhere in Scotland without objection. From his experience in local government and his parliamentary experience, the hon. Gentleman knows that very few major roads are built in Scotland without objection and without a public inquiry.

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. McQuarrie: I am not giving way. The hon. Gentleman was trying to bring in a red herring.

The proposal has been examined by the Transport and General Workers Union, which sees the economic benefits and the benefit of a reduction in the number of accidents. It is invidious and ridiculous that Opposition Members, who talk continually about unemployment and the need to support the trade unions, should not accept what the Transport and General Workers Union puts forward. I may not be correct, but I think the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East is a sponsored Member of that union.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I want to set the record straight and to make it clear that the brother who wrote that letter did it on his individual initiative. Having spoken to the regional secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union in Scotland today, I can confirm that that is not the policy of that union. Hon. Members are free to quote the letter and to quote the points made in it, but it is not the policy of the Transport and General Workers Union.

Mr. McQuarrie: The hon. Member is suggesting that the letter from the Transport and General Workers Union, Transport house, 290 Bath Street, Glasgow, signed by George Wilmshurst, construction trades co-ordinator, is a lie.

Mr. Strang: No, I did not say that.

Mr. McQuarrie: He says that it is not the policy of the union, but the letter seeks support for the passing of the private Bill.

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): Is my hon. Friend aware that Mr. Wilmshurst does not qualify his letter in any way, and starts off by saying:

"The Transport and General Workers' Union favours the building of the Edinburgh Western Relief Road"?

Does my hon. Friend find it bizarre that the union appears to have a spokesman who does not speak for it, according to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang)?

Mr. McQuarrie: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that comment. That is exactly how I see it. Trade unions do not write to Conservative Members seeking support for the passing of a Bill unless they are anxious to see that Bill passed. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East wants to get his act together.

The Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians also wrote on 4 March:

"I herewith confirm that our Union agree that this road should be given priority owing to the lack of work in the Construction Industry at present. As you know my colleague from the T&GWU listed various figures showing the unemployment situation in our industry."

In a further letter on 12 March, the same gentleman, Mr. A. Fraser, the acting regional secretary, said;

"I, herewith, confirm that our Union agree that this road should be given priority owing to the lack of work in the Construction Industry at present. As you know my colleague from the T&GWU listed various figures showing the unemployment situation in our industry. I trust we can count on your support in Parliament next Tuesday, 18th March, 1986."

The Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors also sought support for the passing of the Bill. It points out the problems faced by the construction industry. [HON. MEMBERS: "That is not a trade union."] It is a contractors trade union of which I was proud to be a member. It points out that 1,500 jobs would be created, but Opposition Members do not want those jobs in Edinburgh.

Mr. Maxton: It is disgraceful that the hon. Member, who has consistently supported the Government who have cut capital expenditure on schools, hospitals, road programmes, housing and everything else in Scotland, and who have created the unemployment in the construction industry, should now quote a trade union in his support.

Mr. McQuarrie: I shall not go down the road of the hon. Member for Cathcart. Obviously, he is ill-informed regarding cuts in hospitals, schools and so on. He wants to get his facts right. He should look back to the 1977 era of the Labour Government.

A document issued by the standing joint committee of the Royal Automobile Club, the Automobile Association and the Royal Scottish Automobile Club says that it

"fully supports the concept of the proposed relief road. There is no doubt whatsoever that the road is urgently needed to enhance the amenity and environment of the area, to reduce injuries from road accidents and to improve traffic movement and access.

The Committee is aware of your agreement with these views, from your support for the measure at Second Reading, and hopes that you will make every endeavour to again vote in support of the Bill at the Third Reading."

Enough money has been wasted on the Bill in Edinburgh, in the House, on referral to the joint committee and again in the House tonight. I commend the Bill to the House. I hope hon. Members will do the honourable thing and vote for the Third Reading.

8.57 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I have a constituency interest in the matter, in that the proposed line of the road starts at the border between my constituency and that of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton). There is also within my constituency the entire length of the proposed M8 extension, which is intimately bound up with the future of the western relief road, and to which I shall return later.

I have a couple of other reasons for intervening in the debate. I think that I am the sole Member of the House who happens to be a resident of Corstorphine in the constituency of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West, although I am unable to show him that I happen to be part of his slim majority.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) is as well.

Mr. Cook: Indeed. The hon. Gentleman is correct. My hon. Friend joins me in that distinction. We are two of those whom the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West, assures the House will be reduced to a life of frustration and degradation if the Bill does not receive its Third Reading. I assure the House that I shall attempt to face that future with as much philosophy as I can muster, and I shall seek to explain why I strongly believe that this is not a measure which should receive its Third Reading.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Will the hon. Member accept that I was making that comment in the context of the £100 million development getting the go-ahead in the absence of the western relief road?

Mr. Cook: The solution to that problem is perfectly simple. It is that the £100 million development should not go ahead and, as the Member for Livingston, I have a perfectly clear case for saying that Lothian region, which is the promoter of the Bill, should stand by its own strategic plan, shut out that proposal and affirm Livingston as a major shopping centre for the western part of the Lothian. This would be entirely consistent with the policy of the promoters of the Bill.

My main reason for seeking to intervene is that for a decade I was the Member for Edinburgh, Central, where the western relief road terminates, and I have a considerable affection still for the centre of Edinburgh. I believe that the central community of Edinburgh represents one of the successful examples of a living community within a city centre. I can say that with some objectivity, since I was not born in Edinburgh, but in Bells hill, but I must admit that the centre of Edinburgh is considerably more elegant than the centre of Bells hill.

The reason why the centre of Edinburgh is so successful is that it retains a large body of people who are prepared, and want, to live there. I have to confess that I consider the centre slightly less civilised now that it returns a Conservative rather than a Labour Member of Parliament. I am surprised to note that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher), who replaced me as the representative of that constituency, has chosen to attend only the first half hour of this debate and has not been present for the last one and a half hours.

I would put it to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central, that he holds one of the few seats held by the Conservative party bang in the middle of a major city. The reason why this is possible is that Edinburgh is one of the few cities in which the middle class have still not moved out of the town centre, but seek to stay there because it is an attractive environment and a pleasant place in which to live. The overwhelming reason for Edinburgh being a pleasant place to live in is that it has not made the mistake of other cities by ringing its inner city and strangling it with urban motorways.

I must admit that this was an accident. The progressives who ruled Edinburgh in the 1960s had grandiose plans to build an urban motorway wherever they could find the space, and in many cases where they could not find the space. But the progressives, bless them, could never brace themselves to spend the money to build the motorway. Therefore, at a time when motorways were fashionable, none was built in Edinburgh. Since then, they have learnt from the mistakes of other cities—a fate that would have been theirs had those roads been built. We can see that fate in other cities. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) talked eloquently about the problems that arose around the motorways in Glasgow, and similar problems have occurred elsewhere in Scotland and, to an even greater extent, in England.

There is the example of the havoc created by these urban motorways in Carlisle, where the urban motorway that goes into the city centre is called the Georgian way. When, on my first visit to the Georgian way, I asked how it came by this curious title, because I could see no Georgian houses on either side, I was assured by the chairman of the planning committee that it had been named the Georgian way after the Georgian houses that had been pulled down to make way for the dual carriageway.

That is a mistake that Edinburgh has avoided, and the residents of the Edinburgh city centre have now come to realise that if they wish to preserve their community and their environment this can be done only by resisting every fresh attempt to drive a new road into the centre of the city. In my time as the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central I had to resist a number of such proposals, including, most obviously, a clear parallel with the proposal before the House tonight, the British relief road. I would say to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West, who paraded a number of arguments in favour of the western relief road—that it would relieve traffic on the city streets, that if it was not built those streets would become congested, that it would provide additional environmental measures without which the residents would be reduced to a life of frustration and degradation—that those same arguments were paraded a decade ago in support of the British relief road. But we stopped it because we were not convinced, and life on the south side of Edinburgh continues very much as it did 15 years ago before that proposal was mooted.

[Mr. Cook]

The reason why all those roads have been resisted is that any new road is likely to bring more traffic. More and bigger roads mean more and faster traffic. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, West attempted to make the case that the western relief road, uniquely in the history of dual carriageways, would not attract a single additional form of transport into the city centre. I do not believe that. One of my reasons is that, from experience as the Member for Livingston I am aware of the proposals for the M8 extension, which is designed to join the outer-city bypass at precisely the point at which the western relief road leaves it. That, in turn, is a variation on the original proposals which we debated 10 or 15 years ago, when we insisted that the M8 extension should meet the outer city bypass at a different point. Motorists did not then have the incentive to travel on into the centre of Edinburgh.

It is proposed that we should have a motorway system which enables one to drive from Greenock through Glasgow, on to the M8 to Newbridge, on to the M8 extension and the outer city bypass and then along the proposed western relief road until all that motorway traffic suddenly comes to a dead halt at a set of traffic lights stuck at the bottom of Lothian road. It makes no sense to connect the centre of Edinburgh with Glasgow along a dual carriageway system that suddenly terminates there.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, West suggested that there might also be a car park for 1,500 cars. Lothian region has also proposed that, but it has never finalised its planning proposals. Lothian region asked the House for permission to spend £37 million on the western relief road, but it has never braced itself to spend the money on building a car park for 1,500 cars at the eastern end of the western relief road. So motorists will find not a car park, but just a set of traffic lights.

If traffic is encouraged to use the motorway system, the M8 extension, and then the western relief road, the volume of traffic focused on that point in the centre of Edinburgh will eventually oblige the planners to devise new ways of getting the traffic through the city centre and out the other side. If half a through road is built, the pressure of traffic will eventually oblige planners to think of building the other half of it.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that since my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has approved the plans for that car park building, the region has given me to understand that it has every intention of going ahead with it?

Mr. Cook: I am informed that the region has hitherto been unable and unwilling to finance such a project, and is still looking for a promoter. The region's original position was that the district council should build the car park. That adds insult to injury.

What is proposed is a perverse conjunction. On the one hand, the region wishes to construct an outer-city bypass, but, on the other, that same highway authority proposes a through road to channel the traffic into the city centre. Logically speaking, both cannot be done at the same time. If the future of handling traffic coming from the west of the city lies in an outer-city bypass, that bypass should be given a chance to prove itself without having the experiment weakened by the construction of a road that will funnel traffic into the city centre.

The alternative requested by those in central Edinburgh is clear. It is an alternative that has been endorsed by the residents of Gorgie-Dalry, to whom the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West referred with such touching concern. But as recently as last night the Gorgie-Dalry community council affirmed its opposition to the western relief road, because it does not believe the figures given by the hon. Gentleman for the relief that the western relief road will provide for Gorgie-Dalry. It believes— history proves it right—that if that new road is built there will be more traffic in the city centre, which will mean that the residents will see their environment deteriorate.

The alternative is to find methods of traffic management which, far from inducing more traffic to the city, will discourage and decrease it. That brings me to the curious position taken by the Bill's promoters. They say that if the road is built they can then undertake traffic management schemes to improve the environment in places such as Gorgie-Dalry. However, when the matter was considered in Committee, and whenever an amendment was tabled to insert traffic management schemes into the proposed Bill, it was resisted by the Bill's promoters. They believe that the road should be built first and traffic management schemes can then be tried. That is the wrong way round. We should first try traffic management schemes, which will cost only a fraction of the cost of the road, and if they fail the promoters can come back and make a case for an additional road to cope with additional traffic. Let us have traffic management proposals first, not last.

Mr. Fairbairn: The hon. Gentleman has not read any of the documents, far less the evidence. The traffic management schemes proposed by the promoters cannot take place unless the western relief road is built. On the contrary, the objectors, for whom the hon. Gentleman speaks, proposed not traffic management schemes but schemes which would enable even greater flows of traffic to pass through Gorgie-Dalry and Stenhouse and reach the centre of Edinburgh even more quickly, knocking down large amounts of property and destroying large numbers of jobs in the process. The hon. Gentleman should read the evidence.

Mr. Cook: My objection to the road does not oblige me to support every objection made to the Bill. My objection is that the measure will bring more traffic to the centre of Edinburgh. From my long acquaintance with central Edinburgh, I would be astonished if the Cockburn association committed itself to a proposition which would enable more traffic to reach the city centre. An obvious traffic management proposal which would obviate the need to build the road is to reduce the capacity of the city centre to absorb cars by reducing parking opportunities and by introducing great opportunities for public transport.

That brings me to the second option available to us. I am sponsored not by the Transport and General Workers' Union but by the National Union of Railwaymen. The Bill has one clear consequence. There will have to be a realignment of the main Edinburgh-Glasgow railway line. That realignment will involve considerable additional engineering works. British Rail, which is in a position to know, has calculated that for 18 months that additional work on engineering requirments will mean a five-minute delay on the Edinburgh-Glasgow service. I remind the House that the end result will be a two-minute advantage for motorists when the road is completed. If we are serious about discouraging people from travelling by car and about

generating the sort of impact on the city centre to which I have referred, it is ludicrous to propose a measure which will make rail less attractive compared with the competing mode of transport by car.

Mr. McQuarrie: The hon. Gentleman should get his facts right. As my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) said, at no time has it been accepted that there will be an 18-month delay. Evidence to the Joint Committee varied from 12 to 18 months, and it was admitted that it would be the responsibility of the contractor, once the contract was let, to decide how he would carry out the work involved, for example in Balgreen road. There may be no delay.

Mr. Cook: I am perfectly happy to split the differance with the hon. Gentleman and compromise on 15 months. My confidence that it will be the lower rather than the higher figure is not enhanced by his submission that the contractor will decide how the work will be done. It is perfectly clear from the eviidence provided by the district council to every hon. Member that there will be considerable additional engineering requirements for building the railway line and that this cannot be achieved without disruption the rail services for perhaps more than a year.

On Monday, there will be an historic achievement in Midlothian, because on that day the Bathgate line is to be opened up to passenger traffic once again. I give credit where it is due. The former Secretary of State was extremely sympathetic to this proposal when I and my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) went to him with it, and throughout the past two years he has been supportive of the case for re-opening the Bathgate line to passenger traffic.

If the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) cares to delve back in history, he will find that it was not a particularly sensible proposal, nor very clever planning, to close the Bathgate line in the same year that a new town was designated—Livingston—slap bang on the line that was being closed to passenger traffic. We are undoing that damage of 20 years ago, and as from Monday passengers will be able to travel that line and the passenger service will be restored.

I do not disagree with the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West when he says that restoring the Bathgate line will have a moderately modest impact on the number of cars travelling into west Edinburgh. There is another way in which, now that passenger traffic is being restored and that line has been upgraded, it can make much more than a modest impact on traffic coming along the A8 into the Corstorphine end of Edinburgh. If we were to take the opportunity provided for us to supply a park-and-ride facility at Newbridge, we could make inroads into the number of car-borne people coming into the centre of Edinburgh by providing for them a public transport facility at far less cost than it would require to construct the road to get them into the city centre in their cars.

This is a highly contentious measure. There was a suggestion earlier that within the Joint Committee the divisions were entirely on party political lines, but the hon. Gentleman declined to confirm whether or not that was so.

Mr. McQuarrie: Nonsense.

Mr. Cook: If the hon. Member will let me finish my sentence, he might find that he is committing himself with undue haste. It is certainly the case that in the Lothian regional council and the Edinburgh district council the divisions have been on party lines. In Lothian region, because of the extremely tight party political balance, frequently this major proposal has been given approval on the basis of the casting vote of the chairman of the committee. The proposal is contentious, with a very narrow basis of political support within the regional council itself, and it is now proposed that this measure be approved on Third Reading tonight.

We understand that Lothian region is standing by ready to let the first contracts immediately. Why the haste? On 4 May that political balance will alter. There can be no doubt about that.

The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) may laugh, but if he seriously expects that the Conservative party will emerge with the same number of regional councillors in Lothian on 8 May, his optimism exceeds the views of any known Conservative Member of Lothian region. That balance will change. There will no longer be a majority on that council for this proposal.

I would regard it as highly improper if Lothian region, while it still has that casting vote majority, committed the ratepayers and residents of Lothian region to this major project in its dying days. If there is the slightest suspicion that Lothian region is prepared to take that improper step, I believe that the House would be wise to make sure that it does not grant it permission to do so.

The House and Lothian region would be well advised to delay any start on this project until we have the opportunity to consider the impact of the outer city bypass on traffic coming into the city centre, and until we have the opportunity to determine whether the figures quoted by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West are correct—an opportunity which will arise only next year. Given the imminence of the opportunity to put to the test the figures that the hon. Gentleman quoted, I believe that there can be no case for the House giving the Bill a Third Reading at this time.

9.19 pm

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I listened with interest to the remarks of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). As one of those who serve on the Joint Committee, of both Houses, I shall address myself to the priority of the mechanism used to consider this matter. Although a Joint Committee has only once been used for a Scottish Bill, it has frequently been proposed as the correct mechanism. The advice of the Chairman of Ways and Means and the Lord Advocate on all those occasions has been that the procedure was inappropriate and should not be adopted unless certain fundamental characteristics were fulfilled.

In 1920, the Chairman of Ways and Means, Mr. Whitley, said:

> "I should have taken objection to the Motion to refer the matter to a Joint Committee of the two Houses. I say that because I think it my duty to straighten the hands of the Commissioners who conduct the inquiries into this matter. I hold very strongly that it is the duty of petitioners to bring their case before the tribunal in Scotland, and that this House ought not to consider any revision of the decision of those Commissioners if the petitioners have failed to put their case before the Commissioners sitting in Scotland, and in no case to allow a review of those decisions unless some wholly new facts have arisen." — [*Official Report*, 3 December 1920; Vol. 135, c. 1610.]

That was confirmed by the Member of Parliament for Edinburgh, East (Mr. John Wheatley), who said:

[Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn]

"the House would be slow to give effect to any such Motion unless they were satisfied, *prima facie*, on the case presented that some large and important constitutional issue was raised, or that some material miscarriage of justice had been effected; and that they would not sanction the repetition of the previous procedure and a rehearing of the case unless conditions such as I have indicated were satisfied."—[*Official Report*, 20 July 1950; Vol. 477, c. 2568.]

In this case, the matter was agreed, as I understand it. Therefore, quite inappropriately, the matter was referred to a commission of both Houses with an apparent open brief to reconduct the inquiry of the parliamentary commissioner. That was wrong and an abuse of the process that should never happen again. I say these things because it is as if the requirements on the Joint Committee, which are essentially the requirements and functions of an appeal court, were in some way dissolved by the agreement between the two sides that it should be referred to them.

It is as if, in an appeal court, the fact that leave to appeal had been granted removed from the appeal court the restriction of its function. We know what the functions of the appeal courts are. The fact that any Committee of both Houses has those limited functions was stated by the Chairman of Ways and Means in 1920, was restated by the Lord Advocate in 1948 and since that time has frequently been stated when attempts have been made to refer Scottish Bills to such a Committee.

I cannot complain that the Committee had to undergo a complete retrial of the position. It is important for the future that rulings should be made by the Chair and by the Clerks that, where it is agreed or not agreed that a matter on a Scottish Bill should be remitted to a Joint Committee of both Houses, the writ of the Committee runs only to investigate new circumstances, constitutional impropriety or other such matters as I have read in the judgments given to the House.

I asked those acting on behalf of the petitioners against the Bill if they had any such grounds, if there was any new position, if there had been constitutional impropriety or if there was any reason whereby they could sustain the fundamental requirements set out in the opinion of the Chairman of Ways and Means in 1920 and the Lord Advocate in 1948, and I was told that there was none.

At the conclusion of the evidence, I again asked whether a single fact had been brought before us which had not been brought before the commissioners in the original 52-day inquiry and I was told that there was none. It seemed that it would be quite improper for those sitting in judgment in the Committee of both Houses to interfere with the judgment of parliamentary commissioners properly constituted, without a reason or fact being shown as to why we should do that. Fundamentally, the whole process is wrong and I trust that it will never be repeated unless such objections are properly raised and argued.

I should now like to examine the merits of the matter assuming that we have the right to consider them afresh—in the same way that Wimbledon should be replayed as McEnroe was irritated because he lost the first time round. The evidence for the promoters presented before the House was clear, substantivly argued and undented by cross-examination or by any evidence by the petitioners against it. It was backed by facts which were not contradicted but were conceded by the petitioners against the issue. There was a fundamental difficulty in that the promoters had set an objective which was to relieve the communities of Gorgie, Dalry, Stenhouse, Roseburn, Corstosphine and Murrayfield and that part of Edinburgh, by preventing the traffic from affecting the residents there. It is all very well for the hon. Member for Livingston, in his grand, compassionate, Socialist way, to say that that is fine for the residents and that if they did not like 24,000 cars rolling past their houses they would not live there and that if they did not like their children being knocked over on pedestrian crossings they would move. That is a fundamentally objectionable argument.

The promoters and their advisers addressed themselves to the problem of removing traffic from the communities in the areas of heavy traffic flow. They discovered that they could do that. I find it fundamentally impressive that the promoters commenced by telling their clients that they were not arguing whether the western relief road was a good idea; rather, they wanted to examine all the options. They wanted to look not just at the no-road option but at all the alternatives before deciding. They came up with the answer that it was an astonishing idea on environmental, cost, humane and noise grounds.

Mr. Maxton: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman really want a mile-and-a-half traffic jam every morning?

Mr. Fairbairn: The hon. Gentleman does not know the position. I know it better than he does. I have done more to preserve Edinburgh and to prevent inner road traffic jams than the hon. Gentleman has dreamt of.

I was equally impressed, in the reverse direction, by the letter by the so-called experts who accepted their remit. Even before the experts considered the proposal, they said, "We agree that we shall mount arguments against the western relief road." In other words, they said, "We are willing to accept our fee to argue the case against the road." That was similar to a surgeon saying, "I agree to recommend the amputation of the legs. Perhaps you will send me the patient later. Please include the fee." That sort of partiality was distinguished from the impartiality of the promoters' adivisers.

I am a life member of the Cockburn association and the National Trust and one of the founders of many of the preservation societies in Edinburgh. I am president of the Duddingston Preservation Society, in the constituency of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang). No one should think that I do not accept that Edinburgh should be preserved.

The hon. Member for Livingston confused the insanity of the Abercrombie plan, the Buchanan plan and anything to do with Sir Robert Matthew, Percy Johnson-Marshall, Mr. Riach and Basil Spence, who built Coventry cathedral. Those people proposed a wonderful future for Edinburgh which would be achieved by knocking down buildings and building roads in their honour and by knocking down the beautiful buildings on Princes street and putting pedestrians on one level and cars on the other —all those theoretical architectural madnesses.

I have a confession to make, and I am sorry that the hon. Member for Livingston is not here to hear it. When I was standing for the seat of Edinburgh, Central, I suggested in my election manifesto that Edinburgh's great salvation would be achieved if the inner and outer railways were turned into roads. They have no shops, no pedestrians, no schools and no frontages. They disturb no one. They are like arteries which travel through the body without making the slightest impact.

In the end, there was only one argument against the road—that it would introduce more traffic to central

Edinburgh. The hon. Member for Livingston presented, rather feebly, the argument that this was half a through route and that, eventually, one would be bound to build the other half. It is not half a through route—the route takes traffic that would travel anyway to its destination in the centre of Edinburgh. The bypass will take traffic away from communities.

We hear people talking about inner cities. I wish that they would come to Scotland to see them. The glory of Edinburgh and of other Scottish cities is that people live in the centre. In Edinburgh they live in Tollcross, Gorgie-Dalry, Morrison street, the Lothian road, and the new town. The whole centre is inhabited and that is the glory of our inner cities.

This road will take into an artery—as Lenin was put in a sealed coach——

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): John Lennon?

Mr. Fairbairn: I know that the hon. Member has prejudices, but I did not know that he could not spell. The artery road is a corridor. It knocks down one house and does not affect any community on the way. It relieves the great communities of Gorgie-Dalry and Stenhouse of the traffic which presently reduces the quality of their lives.

It is all very well for the hon. Member for Livingston to say, "They wouldn't live there if they didn't have it." They would much rather live there if they did not have the traffic. I am one of the most committed preservationists and one of those most dedicated to the fabric and glories of Edinburgh.

Mr. Strang: I acknowledge that to some extent. The hon. and learned Member has been on the side of the people of Edinburgh who have opposed these grandiose plans for roads which would destroy the city. How can he explain the fact that the Cockburn association, which he supports, is one of the organisations which, with the National Trust for Scotland, has opposed this road. Yet both of these organisations are on the other side of the argument.

Mr. Fairbairn: The associations did not consult their life members, of whom I am one, and I am not very impressed by the fact that, allegedly, the Cockburn association is against it. We have evidence from the Cockburn association and from Mr. Pinkerton, QC, whose evidence is not only unreliable but is simply untruthful, self-interested and swingeing. We have evidence from a doctor who said that he did not want his way of life to be altered. He said that he had a private parking space in Murray place and that he went to the Royal Infirmary and to the Western General and that he did not want a lot of traffic getting in his way. Therefore, I found the "impartial" evidence of the Cockburn association very different from the concepts for which I joined it as one of its first life members.

I found the evidence of the Labour councillor for Gorgie-Dalry, and the lady who lived in Tollcross, Mrs. Pamela Scott, very impressive. Their evidence was sincere and genuine. What I found odd about the evidence they gave was that they were willing to commit their residents to the horror of the new spur which they wanted to see at Morrison street. It would create infinitely worse environmental conditions.

Apart from anything else, about a third of a million trees would be added to Edinburgh—a great new line. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) said that houses would need double glazing. Obviously he has not seen them. They already have double boarding. Not one is occupied.

Therefore, I regard all these complaints as false. If we must have an arterial road, I have never seen a scheme more civilised, more sensible and more safe, which will cause greater good and less inconvenience to anyone, than this arterial road. It will do nothing but improve the excellence of Edinburgh. For those who believe in public transport, it will improve and cheapen bus travel in Edinburgh. But it will not have a great effect on rail travel, about which the hon. Member for Livingston spoke, because about 5,000 acres of parking space would be needed if there was to be any effect on what I understand is called drive and ride when one leaves one's car at the station, and kiss and ride when one leaves one's wife and she takes the car. That was the evidence before the Committee.

Mr. Wallace: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman's clear presentation of his case, but it has been represented in one of the documents that we have had that one of the technical witnesses on behalf of one of the amenity groups conceded that the new road would not generate any traffic. Can he confirm that that concession was made?

Mr. Fairbairn: It was conceded not only by the witnesses but by counsel for the Cockburn association, for 38 amenity societies, for the National Trust and for the petitioners against the Edinburgh district council that there was no evidence that it would generate a single new car. That is an obvious fact. If one takes one's car to Edinburgh and cannot park it, one cannot use it.

One of the pieces of evidence that I found most hypocritical was that the Edinburgh district council will have to ask for planning permission for a hypermarket at the western end of the road with 5,000 car parking spaces. In other words, 5,000 cars will travel through Corstorphine, Gorgie-Dalry and Stenhouse in order to shop. That seems to me to be the ultimate hypocrisy.

This is one of the most civilised arterial roads that has ever been planned in a major city, the fabric of which must never be threatened.

9.48 pm

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): In the House and elsewhere we hear trendy words such as infrastructure. I am sure that planners, architects and even some Tory Members might use that term, but for the average man and woman in the street it is like hiatus hernia or even perhaps a terminal illness. The so-called western relief road it means many things to many people. All sorts of experts can go before committees, as we have heard tonight, but in my part of the world, in Leith and Muirhouse, we see monuments to such people in the form of concrete tunnels and high-rise flats which are disasters. Yet those individuals who are called experts are applauded when they are mentioned in the Chamber. That is a sad fact, but it happens.

From time to time councils do get it right. Sometimes they get it left, as they did back in the early 1970s when the Buchanan report was rejected. That was a plan which would have brought more and more traffic into the centre of Edinburgh. The councillors, most of whom were

[Mr. Ron Brown]

Tories, realised that more traffic meant less amenity, less city and more urban problems, especially parking problems. We must appreciate that today the situation is even worse.

The Transport and General Workers Union and the Union of Communication, Allied Trades and Technicians have suggested that jobs are involved. I do not doubt that. It is interesting that the two letters that have been circulated come from two bureaucrats in Glasgow who by no means understand the Edinburgh position. I say "two bureaucrats" because yesterday I attended a meeting of rank and file members of UCATT and they disowned a letter issued by Mr. Fraser of that union. I trust the rank and file more than I trust the officials, and I speak from experience. To take the argument to its logical and obvious conclusion, we can get jobs and create work by building Trident or gas chambers. That is not my argument. The rank and file must be heard in this place. They are arguing that the outer-city bypass be completed. Once that is done, we can judge whether the so-called relief road is necessary.

It is a question of first things first — a matter of priorities and using money wisely. This Government talk about doing this properly. We heard the Chancellor earlier today pontificating about this, that and the other. If the Government want to argue like that in Edinburgh, they must do so with people who have to endure many hardships.

Not everyone in the Tory party agrees with this proposal. Certain hon. Members, one in particular, have been vociferous in speaking against the proposal. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) should know, because he represents the city centre. The Government do offer a choice. They say to the working class, "Take it or leave it." That is what they are saying to the working class in Edinburgh.

We know that some people will go into the city to use this road, assuming that it goes ahead. They will shoot in there in their grand Jaguar cars, coming in from Edinburgh airport. They like that, being picked up by the chauffeur and being driven away. But that situation will change soon because of the regional elections. They will be a disaster area for the Tories in Scotland. The majority of Scots will vote against the Tories and their allies, the alliance.

The Government hope to slip this measure through so that they can stick a parliamentary order on the Labour group, but the people of Scotland recognise these tricks. There are no arguments from the Government about whether the road is necessary. It is not necessary unless it is suggested——

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham) *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put; *but* MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *withheld his assent and declined then to put that Question.*

Mr. Brown: We know that the civil engineers have been vociferous, because it is good for business and good for them. However, what is good for the Tories is not necessarily good for Scotland, and what is good for Edinburgh may not necessarily be good for Leith. If traffic comes into the centre of Edinburgh it has to go somewhere. It is rather like a leaking pipe. The water has to trickle out somewhere. All this traffic will trickle through into Leith, creating problems for the people there. That will create more and more problems for the population of Leith. Ferry road in Leith is bedevilled by all kinds of traffic problems. Those problems will be increased. In no way will Leith accept the problems created by Edinburgh.

Leith is very important. The people of Leith have suffered because, willy-nilly, when we speak about Edinburgh we forget about the port. That is the most important place in Scotland. I do not suggest, however, that if funds are available they should not be used for investment in public transport or in traffic control measures that will improve the flow of vehicles around and through the city. Obvious problems should be tackled without throwing money at them. The Tories say that money should not be thrown at a problem, but that is precisely what they have done on this occasion for party political reasons.

The Tories will say that the case against this road has been worked up by the extremists — for example, the Cockburn association and the National Trust for Scotland. They have been denounced this evening by Conservative Members. They are bourgeois organisations and not very trendy, but they are aware of the consequences that will flow from the construction of this road.

To whom does one turn for advice? Does one go to the city council? Does one go to the Lord Provost? John McKay is a moderate, reasonable individual who would explain the views of the citizens of Edinburgh. I am sure that he has written to most hon. Members and explained exactly what should be done. I shall take this opportunity to refer to some of the points that he made. They need to be repeated for the record. He said:

"1. The proposal to construct a Western Relief Road is premature. It should be shelved until the effects of the Outer City Bypass, which is scheduled for completion in 1990, are known. The new Bypass could well alleviate problems of congestion in the Western sector of the City and remove the need for a Western Relief Road.

2. A Western Relief Road would be contrary to the objectives of the Lothian Region's Structure Plan in relation to the reduction of traffic in central Edinburgh. The new road would probably increase the amount of traffic coming into the City.

3. The scale of environmental relief forecast by Lothian Region has been over-estimated. The little, if any, environmental benefit which will arise will not justify the early construction of the Road and residential locations to adjacent to the Road will suffer badly.

4. Any increased traffic volumes produced by the new Road will have an adverse effect on communities in central Edinburgh, including Lothian Road, Scotland" cross and the historic New Town.

5. Lothian Region have not given full consideration to what are called 'No Road' options. Little, if any, thought has been given to alternatives such as traffic management measures, junction improvements, marginal road alignments and the introduction of long-stay parking restraint measures.

6. The new road would involve the loss of valuable recreation and amenity ground and undoubtedly create environmental problems through noise and pollution. Whilst Lothian Region have carried out certain economic and environmental proposals it has been demonstrated that the benefits have been overstated and certainly do not justify expenditure of some £37 million at current prices.

It is felt that expenditure of this magnitude could be directed to more pressing and deserving causes, such as education, social work and health services.

7. Environmental and local pressure groups are firmly opposed to the proposals and such bodies include the Cockburn Association (The Edinburgh Civic Trust) and the National Trust for Scotland."

In his own simple way the Lord Provost of Edinburgh has told the Government, "Get on your bike." Anyone

riding a bike in Edinburgh would understand the traffic problems there. Certainly there are ways and means of forcing through an unpopular measure, but that will go down badly at the next regional election and the Government must be prepared to accept that they will have little representation on the regional council in Edinburgh.

Some hon. Members seem to think that this issue does not matter, but it does matter, and it will certainly matter in the future. I know that not all Conservative Members agree with this proposal. They should think about the consequences of this road and the proposals, and about the seriousness of it for their own party interests, because the people back home will think about it and will vote accordingly.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 167; Noes 88.

Division No. 108] **[10 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Arnold, Tom
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Henderson, Barry
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Murphy, Christopher
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Normanton, Tom
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Gordon
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Woodcock, Michael
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Lord James Douglas-Hamilton and
Mr. Michael Hirst.

NOES

Alton, David
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clay, Robert
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Eadie, Alex
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Garrett, W. E.
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Michie, William
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Dr. John Marek and
Mr. Terry Lewis.

[Mr. Ron Brown]

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 181, Noes 81.

Division No. 109] **[10.09 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arnold, Tom
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beith, A. J.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Murphy, Christopher
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Normanton, Tom
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Gordon
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Woodcock, Michael
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Hirst and
Mr. Barry Henderson.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Clay, Robert
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Eadie, Alex
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Dr. John Marek and
Mr. Terry Lewis.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Housing (Scotland)

10.20 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I beg to move,

That the draft Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Variation (No. 2) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 6th March, be approved.

I shall explain briefly the reasons for the Government bringing forward the order. It will be welcomed by all sides of the House. Hon. Members will recall that the first variation order for 1985-86 was debated on 12 February at the same time as the main housing support grant order for 1986-87. Members with longer memories may recall that a similar variation order for 1984-85 was debated in late January 1985, at the same time as the 1985-86 main order. Early 1985 saw exceptional rises in interest rates and authorities' actual outturn interest rate figures, which have only recently become available, now show that average levels for 1984-85 exceeded even those taken into account in the 1984-85 variation order.

For this reason, and because a substantial sum would otherwise be lost in payment to local authorities, the Government have decided to take the exceptional step of bringing forward tonight a second variation order, which has the effect of paying an additional £4·6 million in total to 30 of Scotland's housing authorities. If the House approves the order, the extra payments will be included with next week's final support grant payments for the current financial year.

In addition to the payments approved on 12 February, this will assist authorities in keeping 1986-87 rent increases within reasonable bounds, and in maintaining levels of expenditure on the management and maintenance of their housing stock.

I will not burden the House with further details. Full explanation and details of the calculations that are most concerned are listed in the report which accompanies the draft variation order.

The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has welcomed our introduction of the order. The action that we are taking to expedite payment of £4·6 million in housing support grants demonstrates our continuing concern to ensure that authorities do have the resources to meet essential local needs. I commend the order to the House.

10.23 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The House would be more than a little gullible if it accepted the last statement that the Secretary of State made, that the payment of this sum of money represents any noticeable change in Government housing policy.

Like the right hon. Gentleman, I also do not wish to detain the House for any length of time, but I would like to put one point to the Secretary of State. He said that this variation emanated from the fact that, because of changes in interest rates and so on a certain amount of money that he originally thought was not available has become available. That has certain consequences for local authorities. In many cases, it has meant that the local authorities have over-increased rents in anticipation of their support grants.

Mr. Rifkind *indicated dissent.*

Sir Russell Johnston: I see that the Secretary of State is shaking his head, but I can think of at least two local authorities in my constituency that have charged a higher rent than they would have charged had they known that this payment might become available.

Mr. Rifkind: The councils should not have had to do that, because local authorities have always received extra payments for extra expenditure caused by interest rates. That has been the policy for many years and is well known to all local authorities.

Sir Russell Johnston: Badenoch and Strathspey, in my constituency, an example that I am sure is mirrored throughout Scotland, is receiving a substantial sum. If it had known that that money would be available, it would not have increased its rents to the level it did.

Many local authorities set their budget at the beginning of the year, and the support grant variation comes perhaps two thirds of the way through the year, after the new rent levels have been set. The complaint is not that the Government give them this back payment, in view of fluctuations that perhaps the Government cannot immediately control, but that there should be some way in which the Government can stabilise the payments for local authorities.

I do not know exactly how this can be done, and neither do the councils, but it is unsatisfactory that local authorities do not receive such payments until all their budgets have been set. We are well into the year and in many cases—for example the Inverness district council—authorities would not have increased rents to the level that they have had there been the possibility of such payments.

Mr. Rifkind *indicated dissent*

Sir Russell Johnston: It is all very well the Secretary of State shaking his head, but that is the view of finance officers of local authorities, and he should take some account of it.

Like any other hon. Member, I welcome increased payments for local authority housing accounts. However, local authorities should be able to forecast their budgets more realistically.

10.27 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): While I welcome any extra money for housing, let us be clear that the money being given by the Government is designed, not to benefit or improve any houses, but to ensure that local authorities do not get into financial problems because the Government got interest rates wrong in the first place. The extra money, to put it in crude terms, goes to the money lenders and not to any council house tenants. It will not reduce one rent, modernise one of the 216,000 houses that require complete modernisation, modernise one of the 134,000 houses that need partial modernisation, rewire one of the 107,000 houses that require rewiring, cure the dampness in one of the 108,699 houses that are damp, nor carry out major repairs on one of the 62,000 houses that require major rapairs. Not one extra penny will be spent on the disastrous crisis in Scottish housing.

Mr. Rifkind: I shall withdraw the order.

Mr. Maxton: The Secretary of State thinks that he is beginning to develop a sense of humour about Scotland. Most of us do not find the housing crisis and the conditions

[Mr. Maxton]

in which many of our constituents live a laughing matter. It is not a laughing matter at all. If the Secretary of State finds it funny, he should ask his constituents in Westerhailes whether they find their housing conditions at all funny. I feel sure that they would not like to see him sitting there and laughing at the housing problems of Scotland.

We welcome any money that will ensure that Scottish local authorities do not get into problems with housing finance, but the Secretary of State should not run away with the idea that the order will benefit, or do anything to stop, the major housing crisis that Scotland faces now.

It is worth pointing out to the Secretary of State that only seven of the 30 local authorities receiving the money have Labour-controlled councils. The rest of them are a variety of different authorities.

Mr. Rifkind: Ah!

Mr. Maxton: The Secretary of State says "Ah", but the interest rates that he was so keen to talk about are paid by those other local authorities as well. Where help has not been given through housing support grant, the tenants have to pay the 60 per cent. loan charges through their rates. The Secretary of State is very keen to give extra help to those other local authorities. For many Labour-controlled authorities there is no help at all. The tenants will face increased rents to pay for those loans.

We welcome whatever sums are available, for whatever purposes, but the Secretary of State should not run away with the idea that by this order he is giving great benefit to housing in Scotland.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved.

That the draft Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Variation (No. 2) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 6th March, be approved.

Privileges

10.31 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I beg to move,

That this House agrees with the Committee of Privileges in its Second Report of the last Session of Parliament (House of Commons Paper No. 555 (1984-85)); and declares that the Recommendation contained in paragraph 14(iv) of the Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations of the Report do have effect from the beginning of this Session.

Last week the House was unfortunately unable to make a decision on the motion to approve the Privileges Committee report. I hope we shall encounter no such difficulty tonight. There is no need to repeat what I said supporting the motion last week, since the House is now well aware of my views. I therefore commend the motion to the House and trust that it will be agreed tonight.

10.32 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I have had the opportunity of reading the report of the debate that took place last week. Perhaps the House will be relieved to know that I find no reason to add to our subtract from what I said then.

I conclude simply by commending, as I did then, the resolution before the House tonight.

10.33 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I will not keep the House long. I have no reason to subtract from anything that I said in the previous debate, because I got out only one sentence before the question was put. I will make now the three points that I started to make.

I said that the Privileges Committee is right to believe that pre-publication of reports from Select Committees does considerable harm to their work. I could not agree with the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who believed that all the information that could be gained at any time ought to be published.

Pre-publication of reports affects the proper working of Select Committees in two ways. First, while it is correct for a Committee to want to hear all evidence and opinions in order to influence its judgments, that should not be done through the press in early publication, but in evidence properly given to a Committee. Pre-publication of parts, or incorrect parts, of draft reports often brings an influence to that Committee that is quite wrong.

Secondly, such action influences the way in which a Chairman writes a report, if he believes that his report is likely to be leaked. Whenever I have taken part in writing reports, as a Chairman, I have usually wanted to go to one extreme or the other because there was disagreement within the Committee or decisions were not finalised. If one goes to an extreme, a report is either watered down or strengthened. It is one of the ways in which one can get agreement from everybody. Thus, the idea that the pre-publication of the draft report shows what the Committee will decide is usually incorrect.

My third and major point is that the Committee of Privileges' recommendations do not go far enough. We should try to stamp out the pre-publication of Committee reports, remembering that it is generally agreed that the leaking of information is wrong. It should be understood from this debate that pre-publication is a breach of privilege of the House.

The Committee has suggested that there is no way by which we can stamp out publication by the press. I disagree. If we held not the reporter or editor of a newspaper responsible for a breach of privilege of the House but the proprietor or publisher, we would need do that only once for the order to go out to every editor and reporter, "Make certain that no breach of privilege occurs in anything you publish in my newspaper." That might be called draconian, but it would ensure that newspapers generally understood that they should not publish until a Committee had decided absolutely on its final report.

I regret that the Committee of Privileges has not gone that far. Despite that, I see no reason not to accept its recommendations. I hope that they will work. If they do not, perhaps the press will realise that we must take stronger steps than are now proposed.

10.37 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I do not agree with the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), because, in my view, we should leave the media alone. The issues with which we are concerned relate to hon. Members, and we should address our remarks to them.

I spoke at length in last week's debate, and I again give notice of my intention to divide the House on this issue. I shall do so on the principle that the report does not refer to the introduction of the Liaison Committee, which is the matter to which I referred in the last debate.

The question of that Committee and its intervention in these matters was raised as an issue only following discussions that took place through the usual channels. The effect has been to diffuse the power of Mr. Speaker. Historically, these matters have uniquely always been referred to Mr. Speaker, and it has been for him to decide whether a motion of precedence should be permitted.

On this occasion we are introducing a filter between the Select Committee, which decides that substantial interference is taking place, and the Committee of Privileges, which must also consider whether it can find in the same way and impose whatever sanctions it feels to be necessary. Rather than have that filter, the route should be clean, direct from the complaining Select Committee to the Committee of Privileges.

That would eventually result in frivolous complaints being avoided. I gather that the Liaison Committee was introduced with the idea of avoiding frivolous complaints being made. It was felt that it would be able to deal with applications and ensure that the Committee of Privileges dealt only with substantial matters. As I say, we do not need that filter. The route should be direct and the Committee of Privileges should, if it receives frivolous applications, inform the Select Committees concerned that they are frivolous. That should influence the judgment of those Select Committees about the complaints that they make in future.

I am trying to put the pressure back on to the Select Committees to be wise in their judgments about what matters should be referred in so far as these cause substantial damage or interference with the workings of a Select Committee. This is of great importance, because we are debating the freedom of information and I believe that Select Committees are sitting on documents which should be in the public domain.

There is no reason why those documents should be held by Select Committees until they decide to report to the House, or alternatively until they decide not to report to the House on certain items which they feel, for whatever reason, may have to be sidelined.

I serve on the Public Accounts Committee, and I spent some time yesterday in that Committee arguing the point about confidentiality and about documents which I believe should be within the public domain. The only way that Select Committees can take reasonable decisions is if they are required to do that knowing that the Privileges Committee would not look too kindly on frivolous applications and complaints being put before it.

The Liaison Committee provides a danger, in that, at the end of the day it will not operate in the way recommended or wanted by the members of the Privileges Committee. Furthermore, if the Liaison Committee is crucial to the exercise in trying to establish what would constitute a breach of privilege, why is it not embodied in the report's recommendations? Why is the House having to accept the imposition of a Liaison Committee because of the contribution of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and that of the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the House?

I believe that what we are doing tonight is wrong, and on that basis I intend to vote against the recommendation.

10.42 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) said that he would vote against the measure; some of us, including my hon. Friend, voted against it last week when the Government could not find enough hon. Members to carry it through.

Mr. Biffen: That was not our responsibility.

Mr. Skinner: The Leader of the House says that was not the Government's responsibility. It struck me that the Government were trying to get the motion through. The Whips were running about like—I was going to say like something else—like flies, trying to get the payroll vote back into the House in the same way that they tried tonight to get through the Private Bill on Edinburgh. It was clear what happened. They even got the Prime Minister in tonight.

However, last week, for some reason, which may have had something to do with Cheltenham and the races, Conservative Members were not present to vote. The Cheltenham Gold cup was on last week, but the Government, who have finished up with the biggest majority since the end of war, could not manage to get more than 34 Conservative Members through the Lobby. That was a strange affair. Most of the Tory Members did not seem to care tuppence about the Committee's report and did not turn up for work. The result was that the Government did not get the requisite quorum. They have had to bring the measure back to the House tonight. I do not know what all the Tories were doing at Cheltenham, but I guess that they were leaking, telling their favourite Lobby correspondents what was going on in these Select Committees.

I do not know what all the fuss is about. What do these Committees do? They write reports, and, Ministers rubbish them. There was one on Sellafield last week and, within three days, the Secretary of State for Energy was on the wireless and television issuing a press report saying that he did not care tuppence for the report. I cannot recall

[Mr. Skinner]

one of the reports of these important Select Committees resulting in any dramatic change either in the House or, more importantly for the people we represent, outside the House.

I therefore do not get involved or enmeshed in these weird Select Committees, which are all about trying to get a soppy consensus. I am not into that. I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Workington that if I were a member of a Select Committee—I am not—I would believe that the Committees should be held not in private but in public. The fact that they are held in private is probably one of the reasons why they do not work properly. The press and the public should be present, if they so wish, so that they know what is going on.

If that happened, there would not be any leaks.

There are no leaks in the House. *Hansard* reports what hon. Members say. Why should it be different in a Select Committee? It is because of the gravitation towards the middle and the desire for consensus. I did not become a Member to represent that view. I became a Member to represent the Labour party and the class interests associated with it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Workington and I shall vote against the motion, for slightly different reasons. I think that other hon. Members would agree with me, but they probably believe that the Committee's recommendation is inconsequential and does not really matter. Like the Tory Members last week, those hon. Members will not bother to vote.

10.45 pm

Mr. Biffen: By leave of the House, I shall reply briefly, out of courtesy, to this short debate which has been valuable in showing an understanding of the Privileges Committee's proposals.

I understand the zest of my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) for exacting punishment on editors or proprietors, but I have to tell him, not that that view has been rejected by the Privileges Committee, but that that it is for the House to consider infringements when they arise. When infringements arise because of the leaking of information by a Member of Parliament or the staff of a Member of Parliament who cannot be detected, that provides a happy circumstance in which to wreak the only punishment available—on the newspaper that publishes that information. We live with that difficulty and, doubtless, experience will guide us in the passage of time on how to proceed.

I have a lively sympathy with the argument of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). I think that there is not a great difference between us. I hope that that will not mean that he goes home sad this evening. In all matters of privilege—we saw this very effectively yesterday—it is a question not only of living by the book but of living by an application of common sense and a measured judgment through experience.

It was thought, not for a sinister reason, that the Liaison Committee would be particularly helpful in giving guidance to the Privileges Committee in the application of that essential parliamentary requisite—common sense—in trying to handle privileges matters. If we do not arm ourselves with common sense, we make ourselves into laughing stocks. That has happened many times when the House has tried to deal with matters of privilege. I hope that the hon. Member for Workington will be charitable about our modest innovation and will see in it not any sinister motive but the desire of the House to take measured footsteps, pace by pace.

That brings me to the charming intervention of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). The idea that I am put in this acutely personally embarrassing position of bringing back to the House for the second time a matter on which I desperately seek the consent of hon. Members because of the ineptitude of the Conservative Whips on Cheltenham Gold Cup day is an interpretation that deserves to be savoured not only in the House but outside it. However, I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that I think that, in many political matters, especially this one, the cock-up theory should be more favoured than the conspiracy one.

This evening, we are performing a modest role for the House of Commons because—and for no other reason—we failed by the magic figure of one to get the matter confirmed by the House last week. I am reminded of the time when my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) was in charge of retail price maintenance and carried the vote by one. He triumphantly said, "The one is enough." On this occasion, I had to conclude in the words of Browning,

"Oh, the little more, and how much it is!"

That was certainly effectively true this evening. I quite understand why the hon. Member for Bolsover has a good-natured contempt for the working of Select Committees.

Parliament is a multi-disciplinary school. Many of us thoroughly enjoy fighting politics in the conventional sense across the Floor of the House and no one does it more effectively than the hon. Member for Bolsover. That does not entitle us to disparage those who seek the route of Select Committees and their particular method of influencing parliamentary and public opinion in great matters of national debate. I hope that we can live in a House of Commons where all these disciplines are happily and generously contained. On that basis I hope I can persuade the hon. Member for Bolsover to be with me in the Lobby this evening.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 104, Noes 22.

Division No. 110] **[10.55 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Fookes, Miss Janet
Arnold, Tom	Forth, Eric
Aspinwall, Jack	Foulkes, George
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.	Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Bagier, Gordon A. T.	Franks, Cecil
Beith, A. J.	Freeman, Roger
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Galley, Roy
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Garel-Jones, Tristan
Bottomley, Peter	Goodhart, Sir Philip
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Grant, Sir Anthony
Bright, Graham	Gregory, Conal
Brooke, Hon Peter	Ground, Patrick
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.	Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Buck, Sir Antony	Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Burt, Alistair	Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*	Hind, Kenneth
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Conway, Derek	Holt, Richard
Cope, John	Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina	Jackson, Robert
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.	Johnston, Sir Russell
Dover, Den	Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Durant, Tony	Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Emery, Sir Peter	Kennedy, Charles
Evennett, David	Lambie, David

Lang, Ian
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leighton, Ronald
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Martin, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
O'Neill, Martin
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stott, Roger
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waller, Gary
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes
Mr. Barry Henderson and
Mr. Gerald Howarth.

NOES

Alton, David
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clay, Robert
Corbyn, Jeremy
Godman, Dr Norman
Haynes, Frank
Howells, Geraint
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McKelvey, William
McTaggart, Robert
Michie, William
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Richardson, Ms Jo
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Wallace, James

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House agrees with the Committee of Privileges in its Second Report of the last Session of Parliament (House of Commons Paper No. 555 (1984-85)); and declares that the Recommendation contained in paragraph 14(iv) of the Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations of the Report do have effect from the beginning of this Session.

PETITIONS

Social Security Reform

11 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I beg to ask leave to present a petition on behalf of the members of the Inverness district of the Transport and General Workers Union Retired Members Association. One thousand of those members have appended their names to a humble petition to the House which expresses a view that legislation based on the "Social Security Reform: Programme for Action" White Paper would be extremely detrimental to the residents of the United Kingdom who are in receipt of social security benefits.

The petition says:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House do not pass legislation arising out of the Reform of Social Security White Paper.

The members feel that the reform involves a redistribution of benefit support within a cash-limited social security system away from women towards men within the family, away from childless poor and the elderly, and fails to achieve an integrated tax and social security system which would be fairer to all

The petition concludes:

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Shops Bill

11.2 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I beg to ask leave to present a petition which was compiled by the efforts of Mr. Lawrence C. Kelly of 56 Ballendaloch drive, Glasgow, which deals with the Shops Bill. The petitioners ask that the Government do not pass legislation which will permit Sunday opening.

Contrary to popular opinion, the proposed legislation is not popular north of the border. I know that the Rev. Frank Myers, the minister of the central Springburn Church of Scotland, and his congregation would fully support this petition because a large number of the congregation and Frank Myers have written to me. They fear that, when and if the legislation is passed, it will mean we will have Sunday opening on the main streets of the cities in Scotland. That would be undesirable to our way of life and undesirable for the shop workers and members of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers who are not enjoying a decent standard of living at present.

The petition concludes:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House do maintain legal limitations on Sunday trading to ensure that the special character of Sunday is protected. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Drug Abuse (Glasgow)

11.5 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I beg to ask leave to present a very important petition which contains 1,865 signatures, mainly from the Germiston district of Glasgow, Springburn and also from the Royston district which is mainly in the constituency of my hon.

[Mr. Michael J. Martin]

Friend the Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. McTaggart), who wishes to be associated with this petition.

The people in the community are greatly concerned about the scale of drug abuse in the area. They call for this House to pass legislation to combat this very serious problem. Since Christmas, a number of young boys have died because of this dreaded problem.

The petition was compiled by members of the G21 drug rehabilitation group, which consists of mothers, parents and young drug addicts, the local clergy and community workers. They are all trying to do something. They ask that this House should do its very best to pass legislation to combat the problem.

The petition concludes:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will pass legislation to combat this problem and to provide more amenities and resources.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

RAOC, Hilton

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

11.6 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): At Hilton in my constituency there is a vehicle depot that is run by the Royal Army Ordnance Corps. It covers some 270 acres just outside Derby. I understand that it is responsible for the storage of about 7,000 vehicles of every kind—scooters, cars, taxis, fire engines, ambulances, lorries, Land Rovers: in fact, everything that moves and belongs to the armed forces, right up to huge tank transporters which sometimes block up our local villages. They are not regarded, in technical language, as specialised vehicles. They are "B" vehicles.

On the same site, there is also a REME workshop, whose job it is to repair those vehicles. The whole operation at Hilton is the maintenance and storage of vehicles. It is one great big garage—one of the largest in the country. It covers a very large area. It employs about 250 of my constituents and also constituents of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), who wishes to be associated with my remarks.

After the war there were dozens of these depots all over the country. Recently most of them have been closed. Only three are left in England. The others are at Ashchurch and Ludgershall. All of them are now associated in management terms. The other depots specialise in vehicles such as tanks that are known as "A" vehicles, but Hilton is the only depot that is entirely a civilian operation. It reports to military personnel who are based at one of the other depots.

In August 1982, as part of the review of military spending, it was decided by the Director General of Ordnance Services to take a look at Hilton. The question was this: "We reduced the number of depots from about 30 down to 12 and then down to three. Do we need three? Would not two do?" In the aftermath of the Falklands, an investigation team was set up to see whether Hilton should be shut.

My involvement started a year or so later, in 1983, when I was elected to this House. My constituents came to see me and I exchanged letters with Ministers. I have examples of the signatures of every person who has been a Minister in this Department. I asked lots of parliamentary questions. An official visit was arranged. I was delighted to meet Colonel Bowden, and Brigadier Berrigan showed me around. I was most impressed by the quality of the work done there, by the efficiency of the place and by the good humour, flexibility and commitment of the work force at all levels. Therefore, I made representations about this potential closure. Eight months after my visit and nearly two years after the study started, back came the message: Hilton was indeed needed and would not be closed. This came, for example, in a letter from my noble Friend Lord Trefgarne dated 5 July 1984 in which he said:

"The study has now been completed and its conclusions recommend a continuing requirement for a Central Vehicle Depot organisation for the forseeable future based on the three vehicle depots at Ashchurch, Hilton and Ludgershall."

That was confirmed a few days later in the answer to a written question that I tabled. It reads:

"its main conclusion was to confirm the need for the existing three depots, of which CVD Hilton in South Derbyshire is one."

—[*Official Report,* 10 July 1984; Vol. 63, c. *457.*]

So Hilton was needed. However the Ministry of Defence was not satisfied and another study was to be undertaken to see whether it was possible to privatise Hilton. Indeed, the term that has been used in most of the letters since has been to contractorise. From 1984 to now, another two years, they have been investigated all over again. I believe that the report that was the result of that investigation was available in September 1985. I have seen a one-and-a-half page summary of it. Since then we have had silence.

I asked to see the Minister, my noble Friend, but I was told it was not quite appropriate because a decision had been taken. Nothing has been published; no decision has been taken as far as we know, hence this Adjournment debate. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will realise that a patient Job would have got fed up with all that, and would be having a screaming fit by now. After four years of investigating this depot my constituents and I are thoroughly fed up.

What we are all after is a better, cheaper service. In recent years at Hilton the service has been streamlined quite considerably, even though the military commitment has been maintained. In 1979, I am told, there were over 200 industrials working for the RAOC. Now there are 123, and that includes security staff. In 1979 there were more than 100 people working for REME in the workshops. Now there are, I believe, 68, so the industrial staffing numbers have come down by over 50 per cent., from over 300 to 191. In addition, there are approximately 50 non-industrial staff working there.

There has been a ban on recruitment for more than a year for all grades, and the resulting squeeze on manpower has not done Hilton's reputation all that much good, because its job is to get the vehicles out and it has to leave undone other things that are low priority, such as valeting the vehicles. What the majors and the lieutenant-colonels must think of the rather grubby vehicles they are getting I do not know. It does not help the service at all. I should add that all of my figures come from diligent searching in public sources and nobody has contravened the Official Secrets Act. Hilton has been forced as a result to use contract labour, such as contract drivers, willy-nilly, and I am not sure that doing it in this way, almost by the back door, is at all satisfactory. The view taken is that the work has to be done.

The policies of the MOD in recent months have made the continued existence of Hilton even more important. My hon. Friend said on another occasion that much of our MOD work is done in the south of England. Seventy per cent. of military personnel and 60 per cent. of civilians working for the MOD are based in the southern region. Those are areas that do not need the extra jobs, but Derbyshire and Staffordshire do. The south can do without the extra competition for land and for housing, but the north and the midlands are keen to see growth and development and are desperately anxious not to lose what they already have. Unemployment in Derby is 13 per cent. and I have a feeling that is more than in Pirbright and in one or two other places down south that could probably manage with less work.

If the MOD wants to save money while not compromising the service, there are a number of things it could do, probably without contractorising and certainly without investigating the place all over again. But it would involve listening to the people who work at Hilton and who have some good ideas. For example, within the fence of the depot they all work as one — the depot and the workshops. There is complete flexibility among the work force. Electricians will do fitting, storekeepers will drive, the drivers will put a battery in, and so on, and yet they report separately to RAOC and REME.

They have allocated to their budget two lots of headquarter expenses, all of it military. Therefore, one of their suggestions is to make it a single company. That would be more efficient and would save money. Another proposal is to ask whether civilianisation is not a better way to run this service. Of the three depots only Hilton is entirely civilian: the others are part military. I am told that there are reasons for this, that the military personnel need to know how to run them. Fine, but they can be seconded to Hilton, they do not need to be permanent staff. I am also told that a 24-hour commitment is required and that only the military can provide that.

The experience at Hilton, particularly during the Falklands crisis, surely shows — I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will confirm this—that civilians can and do offer exactly the same commitment, and do so without question. In any case, the argument about commitment applies just as much if the depot was privatised. The military have no monopoly on patriotism. I think that we dealt with the argument in the debate on the privatisation of the royal ordnance factories.

But the military are expensive. If we compare the salaries of civilians with the appropriate military equivalent, we get some interesting figures. For example, the top rank civilian who works at Hilton costs £17,823. The equivalent military rank is a lieutenant colonel, who costs £32,385 — that is only his pay — almost twice as much. The executive officer at Hilton costs the state £11,117. The equivalent rank is a captain, who costs £19,661 — again almost twice as much. The lowly clerical officers, the people who actually keep the place going, cost £7,641 each. The equivalent is a staff sergeant costing £14,827, again a ratio of almost two to one. May I emphasise that the military costs are only pay, national insurance, pension and gratuity costs? If we add accommodation costs and the other little extras that the military have, such as school fees, the cost of employing a soldier, especially a senior soldier, instead of a civilian, become astronomical. I believe that the case is firmly made that it is cheaper to have civilians, such as my constituents, with no loss of efficiency in service.

The case made by the people who work there was summed up best, not in my words, but in the words of Mr. O'Hara, who is one of the union representatives, in a letter dated 24 July 1985, in which he said:

"*FACT* We at Hilton can issue vehicles more efficiently, more cheaply than the other Depot with a military presence.

FACT We have greater flexibility of labour than the other depot with military management.

FACT We have a loyal work force who, when called upon, can, and do, work the same hours and often more than our military counterparts, sometimes if needed on 24 hour call out, many with some 17-20 years service to the crown behind them . . .

FACT We are a shining example of how to run a Vehicle Depot cheaply and efficiently . . .

FACT We have been studied countless times for a number of reasons and every study has been sponsored by the military. It's time the picture was looked at by an independent body."

He went on to say—I have a lot sympathy with this—

"The truth is that we are an embarrassment because of our efficiency."

My constituents are worried and suspicious about some of the advice that my hon. Friend the Minister has been

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

given. If Hilton were to shut, we would lose the strategic benefits of having our vehicles on more than one site, and we would lose a site giving major employment in an area not overly well endowed with employment. If Hilton were to be privatised we would disrupt an excellent and smoothly running service. We would probably save very little. Indeed, redundancy costs would make it quite an expensive operation.

In either case, we would lose the dedicated and loyal service of a first-class work force and we would end up with something less efficient in both performance and cost. But if Hilton were allowed to stay open, with some of the ideas of the work force put into practice, the service would benefit, the Ministry of Defence would benefit and my constituents could continue to be as fanatically proud of the work that they do for our nation as they are now, and quite rightly so. I hope that my hon. Friend will consider these points and set our minds at rest tonight.

11.18 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. John Lee): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) on her good fortune in securing this Adjournment debate. I welcome the opportunity to give as full a statement as I can about the Royal Army Ordnance Corps vehicle sub-depot at Hilton. Before dealing with the more specific issues raised by my hon. Friend I think it would help if I were first to explain the background against which decisions concerning support to the Army are made.

It is a major objective of this Administration to instil into all areas of the public sector a much greater awareness of costs and cost-effectiveness. We have done much, for example, to encourage the participation of the private sector in support of those administrative activities which it is not strictly necessary to have done by MOD employees. The taxpayer is already benefiting from greater competition, either as resources are released for more effective use elsewhere or where cost-cutting reduces the burden the public sector imposes on the economy. This is evident, for example, in the way in we have been able to reduce the size of the Civil Service, so that expenditure on salaries, and so on, is correspondingly lower than it would otherwise have been.

The financial management initiative is a catalyst for much work in the Ministry of Defence, in part aimed at improving the knowledge that managers at all levels have of their costs. Indeed, some of the studies to which I shall refer later result from the more creative thinking which the FMI has encouraged.

As I have said before, it is a paramount point of principle that we have a duty to the taxpayer to see that defence funds are spent only on essential activity, and spent in the most cost-effective manner. In the defence support area it is the policy of the Government to retain activities in the public sector only where this is operationally essential or where there is a clear advantage to the taxpayer. In this way, we aim to extend the scope of activity which benefits from the effects of competition.

Support for the army, and logistic support in the case of the vehicle sub-depot at Hilton, must be considered against the background I have just outlined. More important, resources released from the support area can be redeployed to front-line and other operational areas—from the "tail" to the "teeth", as we put it.

I turn now to the Hilton situation in particular. The vehicle sub-depot at Hilton—as my hon. Friend well knows—is about 15 miles from Derby and occupies a site of about 250 acres. It employs some 236 civilian staff and holds about 6,500 vehicles.

It is one of three vehicle depots which between them receive, inspect, maintain, store and issue all Army vehicles—from tanks to trailers, from cars to cranes. They also handle vehicles for the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force.

The other two depots are Ludgershall in Wiltshire, which deals with armoured vehicles—"A" vehicles—and Ashchurch in Gloucestershire, which, together with Hilton, processes the remainder. Hilton's main work load involves "soft-skinned" vehicles—"B" vehicles—which are identical with, or very similar, to commercially available vehicles. Hilton is wholly civilian manned; the other depots are staffed by both military and civilian personnel.

I and my fellow Ministers pay a tribute, too, to our civil servants who serve us so well in so many different capacities and especially at Hilton. I know how much, too, the Army appreciates their loyal service in carrying out their important role. I thank my hon. Friend for the opportunity to make these remarks. I know how committed she is to the welfare of the Hilton work force.

Clearly, I accept the point that there can be valuable economies from replacing service personnel with civilian staff. Indeed, it is quite proper to do so where this can sensibly release soldiers for service in front line units. In the case of the two other depots, however, the military presence is justified by the mobilisation and reinforcement roles which they are assigned in a period of tension or war.

My hon. Friend made reference to possible improvements to costs and efficiency in our current vehicle depot operations by rationalising the management structures of the depots and their associated workshops. The professional oversight of all workshop operations in the Army is the proper responsibility of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. They are responsible for technical standards and practices, as well as for training and various aspects of interposting, for military and civilian mobile staff alike. It therefore makes no real sense, except in the case of contractorisation, for 91 Vehicle Workshop at Hilton to be disconnected from REME's wider control, and I have to say that significant economies are unlikely to accrue from an amalgamation of the storehouse and workshop elements. The same applies in even greater measure to the REME workshops at Ashchurch and Ludgershall, which reflect the discrete specialisms of the supply and the engineering staffs.

Our experience of involving the private sector and introducing competition into Government activity has shown significant savings. Hilton's work load embraces vehicles that are in everyday use up and down the country. It was quite appropriate, therefore, to consider whether there would be advantage in putting the work out to contract. We mounted a feasibility study late in 1984 and received a report which recommended that the idea be pursued. In the normal course of events, we would have then consulted the work force and its representatives about our resulting proposals. This would have taken place last autumn.

However, the armed forces, and the Army in particular, are dependent on vehicles for all types of operational and support activities, and our vehicle holdings are considerable. It is not surprising, therefore, that recently we have been looking even more closely at ways and means of ensuring that we get maximum value from expenditure in this area and that our vehicle holdings are no more than the minimun needed for our purposes. There are a number of studies in train which could impact upon vehicle requirements, and thus on the numbers we need to keep in store. We are examining, for example, greater use of the private sector for the provision of the Army's day-to-day administrative transport. Vehicle leasing is a possibility, and there are other examinations of both our holdings and our purchasing arrangements under way.

What this means is that we are currently unable to forecast with sufficient accuracy Hilton's workload over the next four to five years, and so we are in no position — on that count alone — to frame a viable tendering exercise to which industry could reasonably be expected to respond. The result is that the Hilton work force, knowing full well that a study into contracting-out has taken place, and, indeed, having been given a summary of its findings, has so far heard nothing further about progress. I naturally regret that, but we have not been in a position to say anything useful while the other studies continue.

The climate of sustained uncertainty endured by the work force is most unfortunate, and I should have preferred to eliminate it entirely. However, as I have mentioned, we are still engaged in studies which might materially affect the numbers of vehicles that we need to process through or store in the depots. Certainly, in this situation, we cannot sensibly embark on contracting out, and I am tonight taking the opportunity to announce that it is to be suspended.

But, as I said, I cannot remove the air of doubt entirely. These very studies will make it necessary for us to consider whether the overall load will drop sufficiently for our vehicle support needs to be met by just two depots. This is a very complex area, involving, not only our internal vehicle management arrangements, but our system of the procurement and delivery of new equipment. If it emerges that it may be possible for two depots to meet our needs, we shall have to be clear what impact, if any, there will be on the existing arrangements with our vehicle suppliers.

My hon. Friend raised our intention to ease the concentration in the south of defence units and establishments by encouraging relocation northwards. As I said in reply to the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham):

"This is a matter for continuing review as opportunities arise, such as when major investment is required . . . all proposals will need to stand on their operational and economic merits." — [*Official Report*, 11 March 1986; Vol. 93, c. 802.]

It will be no different in our consideration of the Army vehicle depots.

It is unlikely that we shall be able to reach conclusions quickly, and though I know that my hon. Friend would no doubt prefer that her constituents were given a clear indication of the future, I fear that the necessary work will not be completed before the end of this year. Nevertheless, an announcement will be made at the earliest possible moment.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-seven minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 19 March 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Listed Buildings (Northamptonshire)

1. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in reviewing the listed status of buildings in Northamptonshire.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): The resurvey of Northamptonshire is progressing well and is on target for completion by May 1987.

Mr. Freeman: I thank my hon. Friend for that encouraging news. When he next meets the chairman of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England, will he urge him to give priority in using scarce resources of repair grant-aid to buildings which are listed and empty so that they may at least be kept in good structural repair?

Mr. Tracey: I appreciate the sincerity of my hon. Friend's remarks. He should know that the chairman of the commission has discretion in this matter. However, I am sure that the chairman will have noted my hon. Friend's remarks.

Rates

2. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the average proportion by which domestic rates will increase in England and Wales in 1986-87.

15. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest estimate of the average increase in domestic rates for 1986-87.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Kenneth Baker): A number of authorities have yet to set their rates, but it seems likely that English general rates will rise by about 12 per cent. and domestic rates will rise by between 13 and 14 per cent.

Mr. Hardy: Is this not the seventh successive year in which the Government have compelled local authorities to levy rates well in excess of the rate of inflation and created an utterly inequitable and confused situation? Is the Minister aware that a responsible local authority, such as Rotherham, now has to levy a much higher rate as a consequence of the abolition of the metropolitan counties, which was supposed to be an economy?

Mr. Baker: I have been advised that the increase for Rotherham is 25 per cent. The underlying reason is that expenditure in Rotherham next year is budgeted to go up by 13 per cent. I have to say to the hon. Gentleman and to all local authorities that the figures show that authorities' budgets now show an average expenditure increase of 9 per cent., which is double the rate of inflation. That is the main reason for higher rates increases this year.

Mr. Harris: Is my right hon. Friend aware that some district councils in Cornwall have cut their rates? Is not the lesson to be drawn that it is up to every county council to look at its expenditure in good time and, with the utmost care, to see where sensible savings can be made?

Mr. Baker: I agree with my hon. Friend. At least one of the district councils in Cornwall, Penwith, has cut its local rate. The Cornwall county council rate has gone up for the simple reason that the Liberals are calling the shots; and where they call the shots, the rates go up.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The Conservatives are calling the shots in Sefton and they have not increased expenditure. In fact, they have admitted that they cannot cut services any more, having already cut them to the bone, and that there will be a 20 per cent. rate increase. Will the Minister explain all that? Will he also explain why all the balances have been thrown into the budget equation by the Conservatives in Sefton and why they are leaving to the new Labour administration, after May, a bankrupt borough?

Mr. Baker: The reason is that the outgoing metropolitan county councils have, on the whole, during the past year increased their spending quite dramatically. They have used their balances, and there is little left on which the successor councils can count.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is an unhappy state of affairs when rates are increasing more than the rate of inflation? Although he may not be able to avoid that this year, will he reassure us that the Government will do everything possible to ensure that we do not have a similar increase the following year?

Mr. Baker: I have considerable sympathy with what my hon. Friend says. Those rates increases are regrettable, but they reflect the sharp increase in local authority expenditure next year. The figures that I have given represent an increase in expenditure of between 9 and 10 per cent. My hon. Friend will recall that before Christmas I said that the Government were prepared to fund expenditure roughly at the rate of inflation—3·5 to 4 per cent. If authorities spend higher than that, the ratepayers will have to bear the result. I accept that several authorities are economical and thrifty, and there are several in Lincolnshire. I shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend said and try to ensure that they have a better deal next year.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Secretary of State said that when rates go up in some places it is because the Liberals are calling the shots. Does he accept that we are consistent, in that rates have gone up when we have said that we needed to increase services in councils inherited from the Tories, and that inconsistency is on the right hon. Gentleman's side? His commitment was to cut costs and hold services, yet he has failed fundamentally, and throughout the nation, to achieve that objective.

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman will not be pleased when he sees the figures. Rates rises in hung counties amount to 20 per cent., on average. Time and again—in Cumbria, Cornwall, Devon, Oxfordshire and Somerset, where there are hung councils—that leads to higher spending and higher rates—*[Interruption.]* It is not due to a cut in grants, because this year the amount of central Government grant to local government will be £11·4 billion, and next year there will be an increase of £400 million, giving a total of £11·8 billion.

Mr. Spencer: In view of the fact that only 34 per cent. of householders pay full domestic rates, does my right hon. Friend agree that the present situation shows that it is high time that payments were placed on the shoulders of individuals who enjoy the services, not on the property in which they live?

Mr. Baker: My hon. and learned Friend is right. That is the main thrust of the Green Paper that I have published. My hon. and learned Friend has every right to feel aggrieved, because the proportion of the electorate who pay rates and vote in Leicester is about the figure that he gave. That allows Leicester council to contemplate a rate increase next year of 80 per cent.

Dr. Cunningham: Why does the Secretary of State not accept that the Budget Red Book is planning an increase in rates of over £2 billion? The Budget Red Book plans an increase in rates of 15 per cent., on average. That is what the Government announced yesterday. Why does the right hon. Gentleman also pretend that the Government are not shifting burdens from the taxpayer to the ratepayer? Again, that is what the Red Book shows. Taxes are being reduced miserably, but the burdens are being shifted consistently on to ratepayers. Is that not why, in the shire counties in particular, for which we have all the information, rates are averaging almost 20 per cent.? In Tory-controlled shire counties the rates averages are higher than in Labour-controlled counties. The average for Tory counties, of which there are 10, is 17·6 per cent. There are nine Labour-controlled counties, and the average is 15·8 per cent. Those are the figures. Is it not appalling that a Government who twice promised to abolish the rates have increased the rates in real terms by 82 per cent.?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman knows that I have produced a Green Paper, which is for consultation, which will lead to a radical change and to the abolition of the rates. Referring to the level of grants, the figures that I have given confirm what is in the Red Book. I said that local government expenditure, most regrettably, is going up next year by between 9 and 10 per cent. The hon. Gentleman referred to the shift between the ratepayer and the taxpayer. I must tell the House and the hon. Gentleman that the amount of grant that we shall pay out this year is £11·4 billion. Next year it will be £11·8 billion. We are increasing the amount of grant next year, but, in spite of that, we have higher expenditure and higher rate increases.

Broadleaved Woodlands

3. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals have been received by his Department from the Countryside Commission, or elsewhere, for the protection of small ancient or semi-natural broadleaved woodlands necessary to the preservation of the natural beauty of the landscape.

The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government (Mr. William Waldegrave): The Countryside Commission and the Nature Conservancy Council were closely involved in the broadleaved woodlands policy review undertaken by the Forestry Commission last year, but I have received no further proposals for the protection of woodlands since the Government statement on that was issued on 24 July 1985.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Nature Conservancy Council's recommendations for relief from what until yesterday we called capital transfer tax exclude woodlands of less than two hectares? Will Ministers examine that seemingly perverse discrimination against the poorer and smaller?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am aware of that question and the problem that is involved. The difficulty is that there are an enormous number of small woodlands, and we must consider whether the extra work involved for the NCC would be worthwhile, considering the small amount of CTT that would be forgone. I shall reconsider the matter as a result of my hon. Friend's question.

Mr. Dalyell: What have Ministers learnt from the episode when the Seafield estate—not Sellafield—cut down an ancient part of the Caledonian forest in the Rothiemurchis area, which evaded the Government's legislation?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am not responsible for Scotland. The truth is that we are aware in general that more powers are needed for forestry conservation. A number of useful suggestions are coming forward. I shall be in touch with the hon. Gentleman further on that matter.

Mr. Chapman: As it has been estimated that during the past 35 years more than one third of our ancient woodlands have been felled, and as it is apparent that during the past few years thousands of hedgerows—the seedbeds of much of our rural tree stock—have been uprooted, may I commend to my hon. Friend that the Countryside Commission and other bodies are given every support and that fresh initiatives are forthcoming to encourage tree planting of amenity value in our rural areas?

Mr. Waldegrave: I can certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance. There are some interesting projects afoot, one of which may interest my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison)—the Silvanus project, which the Dartington Commission and the Countryside Commission have developed in the south-west of England for the management of small woodlands.

Dr. David Clark: Is the Minister aware that with inevitable changes in the common agricultural policy 10 million acres of basically lowland Britain will probably be made redundant for cereal production? Does he appreciate that that gives us a great opportunity to start increasing our woodlands in lowland Britain? Will he set up a joint working party with the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to see how we can bring about the reafforestation of lowland Britian with deciduous trees?

Mr. Waldegrave: If I were Lord Hylton, perhaps I would send the hon. Gentleman several of my speeches on the subject. The hon. Gentleman is correct, in that there are opportunities. However, all the land released will not

be from cereal production, nor will it all be suitable for tree planting. The opportunities for forestry in lowland areas must now be increased. It is an interesting matter.

Infrastructure projects

4. **Mr. Franks** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how well English infrastructure projects have fared in 1985 as far as European regional development fund grant is concerned compared to the preceding four years.

Mr. Tracey: I have good news of growth for my hon. Friend. In 1981 the European Commission awarded £66·4 million for English infrastructure projects within the assisted areas; in 1982, £86 million; and in 1983, £97·5 million. 1984 was a record year, with total grant awarded of £182 million, and the level has been maintained with the award of some £185 million for 1985.

Mr. Franks: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that information, which is most intelligent. Will he ensure that the United Kingdom takes full advantage of the provisions for programme funding contained in the European regional development fund?

Mr. Tracey: Yes. The United Kingdom has taken a lead in establishing national programmes of community interest. In England, the Mersey basin programme, with an award of £66·5 million, is now operational. The Shildon programme has received an award of £18 million. We expect to submit further programmes in due course.

Mr. Straw: Will the Under-Secretary of State confirm that the information that he has given is not good news for those parts of the country that are affected? The Government ignore the marginal effects of the European regional development fund by knocking off from the overall total of public expenditure that which they get from the European regional development fund, which means that there is no net benefit to the British economy or to the regions of this country.

Mr. Tracey: It is correct that those grants are additional at national level. Receipts from the European regional development fund are taken into account when public expenditure levels are set each year. Therefore, programmes are higher than they would otherwise be.

Residential Tenancies

5. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to free all new residential tenancies from the provisions of the Rent Acts; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): The Government have no proposals for any major reform of the Rent Acts in the lifetime of this Parliament. However, it remains our wish to encourage the supply of more homes to let in the private rented sector, in order to provide greater scope for responsible landlords approved by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to invest in rented accommodation. Yesterday I tabled amendments to the Housing and Planning Bill to extend the assured tenancy scheme to improved property.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Is my hon. Friend aware that a great deal of residential property in and around my constituency could be brought into use? I accept what my hon. Friend has just said, but does he agree that an extension of the shorthold tenancy arrangements would encourage labour mobility and create new accommodation in areas of shortage?

Mr. Patten: We think that the kind of extension of the assured tenancy scheme that has been proposed will help those who need accommodation. Above all, we need to promote respectable and responsible landlordism in both the private and public sectors. That is what we intend to do.

Mr. Cartwright: I very much welcome the Minister's commitment to extend the assured tenancy scheme, but does he accept that if we are to get additional private investment in the new forms of rented housing that we desperately need the Government will have to provide attractive financial incentives for potential investors and help to ensure that rent levels bring the accommodation within the grasp of potential tenants? When will we see progress being made in those two directions?

Mr. Patten: I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman welcomes our plans to extend the assured tenancy scheme. As for financial incentives to responsible landlords—building societies, insurance companies and pension funds—as well as to private individuals, unfortunatley that is a bit late for yesterday's Budget. However, I shall certainly draw that point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer for next year's Budget.

Mr. Ian Lloyd: What possible real political significance can now be attached to the phrase "a property owning democracy" when the distinction between ownership and occupation has virtually been destroyed by this ill-conceived, ill-judged and damaging legislation? When will the Government grasp this nettle?

Mr. Patten: As I said earlier, we intend to move forward on this issue after the next general election. In the meantime, we intend to extend the assured tenancy scheme. As for owner-occupation and a property-owning democracy, I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will welcome the reduction in interest and mortgage rates, which will greatly help home owners.

Mr. Winnick: Is it not clear that what Tory Members of Parliament want is another Rent Act 1957, which produced Rachmanism and the rest? The Opposition have a duty to warn private tenants that, in the unlikely event of this Government being re-elected, the same kind of Rent Act will be passed as was passed in 1957. Why do the Government not give private tenants the right to buy instead of wishing to take away their existing security?

Mr. Patten: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is talking absolute rubbish. He is going over arguments long dead. He should be looking to the future and trying to find ways in which we can bring back into use, in order to help the homeless, the young and those who are seeking jobs, property which is now empty. That is what we are bent on doing.

Mr. Lyell: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is an enormous advantage in encouraging the private sector to provide new accommodation for rental without rent restriction? Will he consider carefully going down that route as soon as possible?

Mr. Patten: As I have announced, we are to extend the assured tenancy scheme. I can give an unequivocal assurance to my hon. and learned Friend and to all other hon. Members that we have no intention, now or in future, of doing anything that will affect the security of tenants in the private rented sector. Any leaflets that are going around Fulham, for example, stating the opposite are completely and utterly without foundation.

Mr. Rooker: In respect of acceptable landlordism and Fulham, both of which have been mentioned by the Minister, will the hon. Gentleman condemn the proposed private meeting at 7 o'clock tonight of Conservative and Liberal councillors who are members of the housing committee to dispose of much-needed rented accommodation at Fulham Court? Is that consistent with Government policy?

Mr. Patten: That is the first that I have heard of that or of any other meeting that will be held in Fulham tonight. I condemn the tactics of the London Labour party in putting around in Fulham and elsewhere scaremongering leaflets that have no foundation.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: I welcome my hon. Friend's answer to this question and his anticipated answer to my question, which is No. 51, about the extension of assured tenancies. Will he tell Labour Members that there are 600,000 empty houses and that the building of houses for owner-occupation does not meet the needs of the single mobile who want accommodation to rent? Will he please introduce proposals as soon as possible that will meet these needs?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is right, and I shall continue to tell Opposition Members what he suggests. Happily, some Opposition Members, such as the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright), recognise what my hon. Friend and the Government are saying. I believe that a good number of Labour Members recognise that and are doing so in increasing numbers.

House Building

6. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new housing starts have been made in *(a)* the public sector and *(b)* the private sector for each year from 1979 to the latest date available; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): The provisional estimates for last year are 140,000 private and 28,000 public sector starts in England. The figures for 1979 are 121,000 and 69,000 respectively. Figures for the intervening years appear in table 2 of my Departments' press notice No. 135, issued on 7 March, which is available in the Library.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Minister accept that yesterday, Budget day, was a great opportunity for the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on behalf of the Government and especially of the Department of the Environment, to make an announcement that would have resulted in many more bungalows and houses being built in the public sector for at least 250,000 pensioners—some of them in three-bedroom houses—who would like the opportunity to live in decent accommodation for the last few years of their lives?

Is it not a scandal that when millions of bricks are being stocked, when at least 250,000 construction workers want to do some work and when there is much homelessness in our large cities, the Government refuse to do anything because they would sooner have a massive dole queue than allow Labour authorities to build houses?

It is like the pensioner—*[Interruption.]* I have not spoken for as long as a Minister did earlier. It is rather like what a retired miner said to me in Bolsover the other day. He said that the Government care only about looking after the dames of Dulwich so that they can have houses built for them at £500,000 a time while miners——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have my eye on some of the hon. Gentleman's colleagues who wish to be called.

Mr. Skinner: *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Gentleman not care about them?

Mr. Skinner: There are all these retired people——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that that is enough.

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman approaches this issue with his customary neutrality. As a result of the Budget yesterday, mortgage rates have already been reduced by two major building societies. That will be of great help to those in housing need who hope to be private house owners and do not look exclusively to local authorities. The greatest reduction in public sector house building took place between 1976 and 1979. In cash terms, the Government are spending on public sector housing roughly what we spent when we came into office. That is a record which the previous Labour Government could not achieve.

Mr. Heddle: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is a scandal that the public sector is still sitting on a lot of vacant land that could be sold to the private sector and could have built upon it half-and-half houses for sale? Tenants on housing waiting lists would be only too prepared to buy such houses.

Sir George Young: I am happy to tell the House that the day before yesterday my hon. Friend served notice on a number of public sector bodies to dispose of land by auction within three months. It is a scandal that so much land in the public sector should not be used for housing and for creating jobs. We hope to issue further directions in the near future.

Mr. John Fraser: Does the Minister accept that on the matter of rented housing the Labour party will never be neutral? Will he confirm that there has been a loss of 250,000 homes to rent in the public sector since his party came to power? The reduced construction figures show a loss of 250,000 public sector homes since 1979. Will the Minister tell the House the sum total of broken families, illness and disease, homelessness and unemployment and redundancy in the building industry as a result of the Government's abdication of public responsibility for housing?

Sir George Young: The hon. Member continues to look solely at the public sector. The private sector accounts for three quarters of starts, and 1983 saw the highest number of starts in the private sector for 10 years. If one is to take a responsible approach to housing, one must look at both the public and private sectors. Houses

that have been sold are not now available for rent, but they are still homes meeting the needs of the people who live in them.

Repair Grants

10. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will bring forward proposals to allow repair grants to be paid on houses built after 1 January 1919.

Mr. John Patten: We have no immediate plans to do so, though we are considering it.

Mr. Beith: Will the Minister bear in mind that many houses, such as the ex-NCB houses at Lynemouth in my constituency, are in need of structural repair? The tenants who used to rent — many of whom have now bought those houses and installed basic amenities, such as inside toilets, at their own expense — now find they are not eligible for any sort of grant-aid. Will he bear in mind problems like that?

Mr. Patten: I am aware of the problems facing people living in these ex-NCB houses in Lynemouth and the sort of problems that face Castle Morpeth district council. In our Green Paper on home improvements we have undertaken to look seriously at the possibility of extending the time within which repair grants can be paid from 1919 to some substantial period thereafter. We will look at that when we come to our conclusions on future legislation.

Mr. Favell: Can my hon. Friend tell the House what has happened to the Green Paper, because there has been a resounding silence for several months? Is there any reason why we should not introduce a loan system? Why should one taxpayer pay for the improvement to another taxpayer's home, regardless of whether or not the recipient has the wherewithal to pay?

Mr. Patten: In the immortal phrase, Ministers are still considering the responses to the Green Paper. I appreciate what my hon. Friend says about a loan system, but we must be chary about the introduction of any sort of loan system which could lead to back-door municipalisation by local authorities giving loans and taking a share in the equity. We are determined to make sure that our targeting of money for home improvement grants in any future system will be much sharper and will meet the needs of people who really need help.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister recognise that many councils are having problems, not only with houses built after 1919, but with repair grants for houses built before 1919? Will the Government take action to provide sufficient resources to stop the serious deterioration in our housing stock, which will reach crisis level if the Government do not act?

Mr. Patten: Repair grants at the beginning of the life of this Government amounted to about £500,000. I am happy to say that in the current year repair grants amount to some £150 million.

Rates

11. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the decision to enforce rate limits for 1986-87 upon rate levels in the affected authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: For all 12 authorities rate capped, rate bills will be lower than if those authorities had been free to spend as they wished. Of the 10 authorities in London and the metropolitan areas, five will have general rates lower than in 1985-86, and two a virtual standstill.

Mr. Holt: My right hon. Friend's news will be most welcome to all ratepayers in those authorities. What hope can I hold out to the people of Cleveland either that they will be rate capped or that the county will be abolished by this time next year?

Mr. Baker: I have no plans to abolish Cleveland. The answer to the question about rate capping is that it depends on what the budget is in relation to GREA. Neither Cleveland nor my hon. Friend's council, Langbaurgh, qualified for rate capping this year. However, I quite understand that many hon. Members would like their authorities to be rate capped in order to protect their ratepayers from such extravagence.

Mr. Chris Smith: What assessment has the Secretary of State made of the impact of ratecapping on rate and service levels in the rate-capped areas? In particular, how does he view the grossly inadequate provision that has been made to make up for the loss of GLC services in rate-capped London boroughs?

Mr. Baker: I believe that the hon. Gentleman asked a similar question about 12 months ago, when the leader of Islington council was saying that as a result of rate-capping last year there would be massive unemployment and a collapse of services. Islington was rate-capped last year and it has not proved to be the end of civilised life, as we know it, in Islington. Indeed, as a result of ratecapping this year the hon. Gentleman's ratepayers and electors will benefit from a reduction in rates of 18 per cent.

Mr. Nicholls: Is my right hon. Friend aware that one such extravagant council is Devon county council, which has just increased its rate by about 19·8 per cent.? The previous Conservative administration wanted an increase of only about 11 per cent. Will my right hon. Friend remind Devon's ratepayers that that increase was made because the alliance party is now, with Labour support, in control of the council? Should not people bear that moral in mind before they vote for the alliance?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend is quite correct. I was in Devon about a fortnight ago when the rate was fixed. The council is now a hung authority. The alliance party is therefore calling the shots. As I have already said, when that happens, spending, staffing and rates all increase.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Secretary of State aware that for the majority of Cumbrians the most recent rate increases, which arise directly from cuts in Government grant, are greater than the tax reductions announced in yesterday's Budget? What is the point of robbing Peter to pay Paul?

Mr. Baker: The same hat fits in the case of Cumbria——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Answer the question about the Budget.

Mr. Baker: I shall answer the question about the Budget. Cumbria's budget next year shows an increase in expenditure of 16 per cent. As a result, rates are increasing by 36 per cent.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Because the Government cut the grant.

Mr. Baker: No. With great respect, the hon. Gentleman should realise that if expenditure increases by 16 per cent. the ratepayers will have to pay.

Mr. Fallon: Is my right hon. Friend aware that county and district councils in the north-east are this year approving rate increases of between 10 and 20 per cent., and that as a result businesses are being driven out? When the north-eastern county councils launch their "state of the region" report on Friday, will they not once again attempt to blame the Government, although it is their own hypocrisy and humbug that is putting up the shutters on business in the north-east through excessive expenditure and a failure to bring spending into line with Government targets?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend is correct. The figure for Darlington is up 20 per cent., and that is the generality for many of Durham's district councils. I urge all local authorities to restrain their expenditure. The amount of cash to be given in grant next year will be greater than the amount given this year. The rise in rate increases this year is due to very excessive expenditure. It is about time that district councils everywhere, particularly those in areas of high unemployment, realised the damage that they are doing to business.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Instead of making insupportable assertions about the effect of rate capping, is the Secretary of State prepared to talk to local authority associations before next year and perhaps obtain the support of the Audit Commission in an independent costing of local authority services? In that way, there would be no risk of setting a rate capping limit that was less than the real cost of delivering the services that we ask of authorities.

Mr. Baker: Once again, the hon. Gentleman made a similar comment last year, and tried to persuade us that Southwark, which is rate-capped, would suffer considerably. It has not done so. As a result of rate capping, the hon. Gentleman's electors will benefit from a 7 per cent. reduction in rates. Such savings are quite possible if local authorities are prepared to put their minds to it.

Dr. Cunningham: As the Government's own figures show that the effect of rate capping has been to bring £116·5 million worth of grant to the rate-capped authorities from all of the authorities, particularly the shire counties, is not the Government's claim to be protecting ratepayers under this Act simply false? If rates are being held down in a few authorities, as the Ministers claim, that is possible only at a cost to ratepayers in all other authorities around the country, and that is why rates in Tory-controlled Buckinghamshire are being increased by 30 per cent. this year. The Government are not protecting ratepayers, and to claim that they are is simply not honest.

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman's second-in-command understands the rate system better than he does. Rate capping has been of considerable benefit to many authorities. For example, Lewisham, if it had gone ahead with its expenditure plans, would have suffered a rate increase of 67 per cent., while it will now have an increase of only 7 per cent. Hackney would have had an increase of 25 per cent., and there will now be a cut of 11 per cent. It is little wonder that many hon. Members representing other authorities would welcome the sort of benefit that rate capping gives to their hard-pressed ratepayers.

Housing (Share Ownership)

13. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for the environment what information he has concerning the number of local authorities and housing associations which have offered shared ownership as a means of home ownership to their tenants.

Sir George Young: All local authorities, new towns, and registered housing associations are under a statutory obligation to offer shared ownership terms to their secure tenants who wish to buy their homes. In addition, they may sell housing on shared ownership terms to other buyers.

In England, between 1979 and September 1985, there have been 16,505 shared ownership sales by housing associations, 5,870 by local authorities, and 3,070 by new towns.

The number of sales by each local authority and new town corporation is published quarterly by my Department in "Local Housing Statistics."

Mrs. Bottomley: Has my hon. Friend any other plans to encourage shared-ownership as an effective way of helping those with limited means on to the ladder of home ownership?

Sir George Young: We have allocated £57 million to the Housing Corporation to make further progress with shared ownership schemes, and the building societies and other financial institutions are contemplating investing in this sector. It is worth reminding public sector tenants, who want to buy but whose income does not stretch to outright purchase, that they have a right to buy half their home and rent the other half, on the move up to full ownership as their incomes rise.

Mr. Pavitt: In developing the shared ownership of housing, is the Minister concerned about further developing the co-operative sector? In his relationship with the Housing Corporation, will the £57 million be allocated only to housing associations, or is some of it to be designated for co-operatives? When he next talks to the Housing Corporation, will he again seek to institute the co-operative sector, which was so successful but which was wound up just a few years ago?

Sir George Young: The figure that I mentioned was the allocation for shared ownership. There is a separate allocation for co-operatives. The Government are very keen to promote the notion of co-operatives. There are provisions in the Housing and Planning Bill which make further progress, and we shall be pursuing this with the Housing Corporation.

Mr. Rooker: Is the Minister aware that when shared ownership was invented as the half-and-half scheme by the Labour-controlled authority in Birmingham in the 1970s, it worked? This is a classic case of a scheme being taken on nationally, and, unfortunately, the Treasury has a hand in it. Can he do more to encourage the necessary Treasury

guarantees to the rented element so that the building societies and others can get involved in shared ownership in the way that was intended originally?

Sir George Young: The Treasury takes a lot of blame for all sorts of things, but it is a little unrealistic to blame it for the failure to make faster progress with shared ownership. With the public sector, no guarantees are involved. There is a right to shared ownership by public sector tenants. As for the private sector, following the implementation of the Building Societies Bill, the societies are contemplating investing in this area, and discussions are going on to see how we can make faster progress and how we can ensure that there is commercial viability in shared ownership financed by the private sector.

Woodlands (Preservation)

14. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards the conservation of rare species of flora and fauna in woodlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Rare species of flora and fauna, and their habitats, are protected under the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. In woodlands owned by the Forestry Commission, all rare species are recorded in forest district conservation plans. Where appropriate, the Forestry Commission has set up its own protection schemes.

Mr. Flannery: Is the Minister confident that under privatisation flora and fauna will be properly protected under the Act? I refer to a case that has just occurred in my constituency. A man who owned two small woods, called Coombes wood—he lives in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) — sold them to the Forestry Commission in 1958 for £200. He is poverty-stricken. He has just been offered them back by the Forestry Commission for £25,000. Does the Minister infer from that that whoever has £25,000 will acquire those two woods out of a love of flora and fauna and that such a person will defend them?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am not sure how this relates to flora and fauna, but I have inquired into Coombes wood as I thought that the hon. Gentleman might be interested in it. I am told that they have no rare species and little conservation interest. Therefore, it is not relevant to this question.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Does my hon. Friend agree that many ancient woods need to be coppiced if they are to preserve their flora and fauna? Is he also aware that this beneficial practice is often not undertaken because coppicing is not economic and that consequently it is difficult to develop markets for coppicing products?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right about the problems. They are not easy to solve. But project Silvanus, to which I referred earlier, is looking into that matter among others. It is not easy to solve the problem of the drop in demand for these small woods that are scattered throughout the country.

Dr. David Clark: Given that the main protection of flora and fauna comes under the SSSI scheme, will the Minister explain—as exemplified by his hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold), in an answer on 10 March about West Mercia — what happens if the Government decide that an area is an SSSI but later decide that it is not of national importance? Is it Government policy that here should be two types of SSSI—national and non-national?

Mr. Waldegrave: As the hon. Gentleman knows the Act inside-out, he is well aware that the 1981 Act requires Ministers, before making a nature conservation order, to be satisfied that the site concerned is of special interest and of national importance. When the public inquiry looked into the evidence relating to the site to which the hon. Gentleman referred, it came to the conclusion that it was not of national importance. I have no legal grounds on which to overrule the inspector's report.

River Thames

16. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Government will promote and uphold the environment of the River Thames.

Mr. John Patten: The quality of the River Thames has improved significantly in recent years, and I expect this improvement to be sustained.

Mr. Jessel: As the River Thames, with its wild life, is a beautiful and highly-prised asset in the Twickenham area, is it not quite monstrous for the Thames water authority now to demand the power, without permission from the Government, to stop the flow of water over Teddington weir so that at low tide just below the weir the river could run dry? Will the Government insist on retaining the power in the hands of Ministers, who are democratically answerable to Parliament and the public?

Mr. Patten: The River Thames runs though my constituency as it does through my hon. Friend's, so I fully appreciate the need to guard the environment, water quality and flow of that river. But I hope my hon. Friend will appreciate that in the light of the forthcoming public inquiry — whenever it happens, although it is on the horizon—I cannot at this stage comment on the detail of what he said. However, knowing him, I suspect that the campaign will be as long, as loud and possibly as successful over this issue as it has been thus far over the Royal Military School of Music.

Mr. Dubs: Is the Minister aware that many people living in the Thames water authority area are seriously concerned about the effects of the privatisation of that authority because of the grave damage that that would cause to the environment and to the quality of the water and its implications for costs and the threat of water metering? Will he have none of this?

Mr. Patten: No, the Minister will have as much of it as he possibly can. Consumers in the Thames water authority area are looking forward very much to a privatised authority, I am sure, because, after all, it is the Thames water authority which this year is managing to get ahead with rises in water charges of approximately 3 per cent.

Dr. Glyn: Is my hon. Friend aware that when he brings in this legislation it will be a hybrid Bill, because the riparian owners, who are private individuals, will be involved?

Mr. Patten: Hybridity, I suspect, Mr. Speaker, is not a matter for me.

Rates

17. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to amend the Rate Limitation (Prescribed Maximum) (Rates) Order 1986, to include the city of Leicester district council; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): While I understand my hon. Friend's views about the appalling rate increase being proposed by Leicester city council, that council did not meet the criteria for selection for rate limitation in 1986-87 and could not therefore be included in the order recently approved by the House.

Mr. Bruinvels: Will my hon. Friend accept that I feel great and personal disappointment at that most unsatisfactory answer? Will she also accept that the citizens of Leicester consider it outrageous for the city council to bring in an 80 per cent. rate rise, which is 45·5p in the pound? Will she further accept that the money that the city council is spending is excessive—more than £150,000 on public relations, £13,500 on renaming Nelson Mandela park and £7,000 on twinning with Nicaragua? Does she realise that the people in Leicester want to get on with living a decent life, but that the Labour party is doing everything in its power to cripple industry, levy very high rates on all businesses and put on individual ratepayers an addition of more than £30 each year?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am sure that the House appreciates the outrage and indignation of my hon. Friend. Unfortunately for the ratepayers of Leicester, they are not within the selection criteria for this year, but I remind him that Leicester was rate-capped last year and the ratepayers then benefited considerably from this system.

Mr. Janner: Is the Minister not aware that it was the rate-capping of Leicester last year that directly resulted in the likely increase in rates, and that the Leicester city council is doing a first-class job, in spite of the Government's attacks and in the teeth of the voluble, obsessive and despicable attacks by the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels)?

Mrs. Rumbold: I have been interested to hear the other side of the case for Leicester, but I do not agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman, because if Leicester increased its spending by no more than the rate of inflation it would get 33 per cent. more grant this year, and that would be extremely generous. But, like most other councils, the more Leicester increases its spending, the less grant it will receive.

Planning Applications

18. **Sir Dudley Smith** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning applications were dealt with by officers of regional branches of his Department in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Tracey: Sixty-six planning proposals were called in for decision by the Secretary of State, and 625 planning appeals were recovered for decision by him in 1985. My hon. Friend will know that lesser planning appeals are dealt with by a corps of inspectors.

Sir Dudley Smith: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is deep unease in some quarters that his Department is all too readily rubber-stamping the decisions of his regional officials, often in environmentally sensitive cases? Could there not be a better system of double checking where sensitive environmental issues arise?

Mr. Tracey: I assure my hon. Friend that we are very sensitive in the Department to environmental issues. As he will know, we have recently called in one very sensitive issue in his constituency.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not true that the only place in Britain where a house can be built without planning permission is in the enterprise zone in Workington? Is that not an abuse of enterprise zones, and why are regional officials not active in preventing further development from taking place? Is the hon. Gentleman not aware that a housing estate is being built in the Workington enterprise zone, and does he intend to intervene to stop it?

Mr. Tracey: Enterprise zones were set up with the objective of creating enterprise. The boundaries were agreed by the local authorities. Do I take it that the hon. Gentleman is anti-enterprise, like the rest of the Labour party?

Derelict Land

19. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will report progress on initiatives to tackle derelict land.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Under this Government the expenditure on derelict land grants has more than doubled in real terms. An area roughly the size of Wembley stadium is now being reclaimed every working day.

Mr. Chapman: I welcome the Government's initiatives and their record, especially on urban development grant. Does my right hon. Friend see these grants as yet another mechanism for protecting green belt land? Will he look sympathetically, in the light of the proven success in the London docklands and on Merseyside, of extending the urban development corporation concept as a way of dealing with dereliction?

Mr. Baker: I entirely agree that the pressure on the green belt, not only in London but in all the other main conurbations, is considerable. Since coming to office we have extended the green belt to 4·5 million acres—roughly the size of Wales. There are pressures on the green belt all the time. The presumption is against development in the green belt. To accommodate the pressure for land, we must reclaim more derelict and under-used land in our cities. I am glad to say that we have increased expenditure from £24 million a year to, I believe, about £80 million this year. I consider that that is money very well spent.

Mr. Park: Will the right hon. Gentleman take on board the fact that, by considering a complete city when one is looking into derelict land, one stops the development of derelict areas in the inner cities? I refer particularly to the possible development of the Foleshill gasworks site in my constituency, which development is continually turned down by the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Baker: I shall certainly look into that particular case. I have diverted more of the flow of derelict land grant, together with the urban development grant, to the towns and inner cities, because obviously most of the derelict land is within their boundaries. I think that councils and developers all over the United Kingdom find that this money is very useful in bringing useless land back into productive use for housing, industry or commerce.

Local Government Finance

20. **Mr. Watts** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in response to the consultative document "Paying for Local Government."

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend and I have both received a number of written representations and many more informal ones. I am generally very encouraged by what I have heard.

Mr. Watts: Does my hon. Friend agree that by providing a much fairer basis for distributing the costs of local services among those who use them, the proposal for a community charge will bring tremendous benefits to single-person households, and especially pensioners?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right. It will bring about a much closer connection between the use of services and paying for services. That is the objective of the whole operation.

Mr. Straw: Is the hon. Gentleman not ashamed of his proposal for a poll tax, which will cut the tax burden on the wealthiest in society, but, as the Green Paper makes clear, force up house prices and increase the burden of taxation on the poorest in the community, especially the young unemployed? Can the hon. Gentleman name any other major Western country that uses any tax as crude and regressive as a poll tax? If this is not a tax on the right to vote, why does the hon. Gentleman propose to use the electoral register to enforce it?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman should read the Green Paper. We do not propose to use the electoral register. The tax will relate the use of services to paying for services. The misuse of the local government finance systems for all the types of social engineering purposes in which the Labour Party delights has ruined the whole local government finance system and made it very complex.

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend believe that the real benefits of this excellent measure have yet to permeate either to the Opposition or to the people at large? Does he agree that the essential fairness of spreading the burden of local government finance to all who benefit from services will be readily appreciated when it is properly and fully explained?

Mr. Waldegrave: The Labour party is strong on criticism and weak on proposals, although it has made one proposal, which is to have a domestic revaluation on capital values. Perhaps when that permeates outside, the Labour party will find that it is not so satisfactory as it thinks.

Mount Pleasant Airport

21. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the airport at Mount Pleasant has now been completed; at what final cost; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The main runway and essential support facilities at Mount Pleasant were completed on time by April 1985 and brought into use. Work on the remaining facilities is proceeding well and they are being progressively completed and handed over to a programme agreed with the RAF. Given the size and complexity of this project, the final account will not be settled until some time after contract completion. The latest estimated cost is £303 million, plus £10 million for navigational aids, supplied by the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Dalyell: What happens if one Skyhawk with spare parts supplied by the Americans gets through with French made Durandelle Matra anti-runway bombs and blows a little hole 5m deep and 2m in circumference in the concrete, which eventuality his Department has not properly assessed? What will happen then to the £310 million?

Sir George Young: The Property Services Agency, loyally and to the best of its ability, constructs runways to the specifications of the Ministry of Defence. I shall bring to the attention of my right hon. Friend the pertinent comment which the hon. Member has just made.

GCHQ

3.30 pm

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent discussions with the trade unions over GCHQ.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): Representatives of the Council of Civil Service Unions called on me yesterday at their request to discuss the Government's future intentions for staffing at GCHQ. I explained that the Government's decisions affecting GCHQ had been taken in the interests of national security to ensure that GCHQ's operations would, in future, be free from disruption. That objective had been achieved and there was no change in the Government's basic policy. The Government intended that this policy be applied as sympathetically as possible in individual cases.

Over 99 per cent. of GCHQ staff members accepted the revised terms of service. There is, however, a small number of union members at GCHQ who, from the outset, have not accepted the revised terms and conditions of service; they are the so-called B and C optants. They have been offered alternative jobs or premature retirement on redundancy terms.

A few of the staff who originally accepted the revised conditions of service and resigned from union membership, the so-called A optants, have subsequently rejoined. It follows from this that they are in breach of their conditions of service. In all fairness to the overwhelming majority who accepted and continued to honour these terms, they have been asked to honour their original commitment by resigning from the unions they have rejoined. If they fail to so do, they will be subject to disciplinary procedures.

The union representatives asked me yesterday whether these staff would be liable to dismissal as a result of disciplinary proceedings. I informed them that disciplinary matters at GCHQ were, of course, the responsibility of the director of GCHQ and that he had informed the head of the Civil Service that he did not regard dismissal as an appropriate penalty in the proposed proceedings for those who had rejoined the union in the circumstances of the past months, unless there were factors of which he was unaware. I stressed the importance of this explanation which was welcomed by the union representatives.

For all but the small number of people to whom I have so far been referring, the restructuring at GCHQ, designed to meet the special requirements of that organisation, is of course going ahead in consultation with the Government Communications Staff Federation. This will bring real benefit not only to the management of the operation but also to the overwhelming majority of GCHQ staff who have, I repeat, accepted the revised terms of service.

Mr. Healey: Can the Foreign Secretary explain to the House his dogged determination to continue shooting himself in the foot on this issue? After all, the wounds which he caused himself two years ago must still be causing him some discomfort. Can he explain why, two years after failing to carry out the fearful threat which he made to loyal members of GCHQ who had exercised their natural right to belong to trade unions, he suddenly revived the threat a few days ago and now has withdrawn it five days later? Can he explain that extraordinary conduct, which really has made him a laughing stock in the country and has also made him extremely offensive in the trade union movement?

Finally, now that *The Lancet* has published devastating evidence showing that the use of the polygraph, which I believe the right hon. and learned Gentleman has introduced into GCHQ, is much more likely to incriminate innocent people than to detect the guilty, will he now withdraw that American technological gimmick and treat the members of GCHQ as the honest and dedicated public servants they are?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I join the right hon. Gentleman in at least one thing—in paying tribute to the devotion with which the overwhelming majority of staff at GCHQ have continued to serve throughout the changes that have taken place. I repudiate his suggestion that today's question, or anything else that we have been concerned with, has anything whatever to do with the polygraph, which has not been introduced at GCHQ. He will remember that it was the subject of a recommendation by the Security Commission some years ago.

I also acknowledge that the only other observation that the right hon. Gentleman made was to select from his ample repertoire two or three terms of vulgar abuse. He has made no points of substance, because the Government have achieved their basic objective at GCHQ, which was to free that organisation from the threat of future disruption while dealing sympathetically with the individuals concerned.

Mr. Charles Irving (Cheltenham): I have supported all those in GCHQ who have suffered greatly over the past two years since that unfortunate debate, when the matter first came to the attention of the House, which I described as shameful—something which I can never withdraw. But it is reasonable to welcome the flexibility which has been introduced into the situation at GCHQ, some might consider at a slightly later hour. I welcome the statement made by my right hon. and learned Friend. It is right that the matter in its fullest content should remain on the table until after the European Court has come to some decision. I hope then that the revision of the situation can take place in a more reasonable and sensible context. I share the thoughts that have been expressed on the misery and the damage that has been done to family upon family in my constituency. It gives me no pleasure to say it. But it is a disgrace and it should not have happened at the beginning at all. But it is not unreasonable to pay some tribute to my right hon. and learned Friend for making a full and reasonable statement which is far more flexible than we have ever seen before.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because I fully understand, and have always understood, the extent to which this matter, which is of great importance to national security, has also involved difficult considerations for individuals which my hon. Friend, as one of the Members of Parliament closely concerned, has always had in mind. I acknowledge with gratitude the tribute that he has paid to the good sense of my statement today, which affords a reasonable basis for stability at GCHQ consistent with the continued safeguarding of national security.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Why does the Foreign Secretary keep denying that morale

has been grievously injured at GCHQ? Will he give the House the figures of the turnover of staff in the past two years compared with any previous two years that he cares to choose, which will demonstrate that what has been said on both sides of the House is true? Does he agree that the most constructive thing that he could do now is give a categorical assurance of no dismissals at GCHQ in order to produce total stability there?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have nothing to add in respect of that last matter to what was said at the meeting yesterday which was concerned with that small group of people who had rejoined in the circumstances prevailing in recent months. On the more general question I must tell the right hon. Gentleman that I do not have statistics immediately available, but I understand that recruitment at GCHQ has been on a reasonable basis. There have been no problems, save in respect, as always, of certain highly specialised grades. That is one of the reasons why restructuring of the grades and pay structures at GCHQ is now being undertaken at the request of the staff federation.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that this has been an unfortunate saga? However, looking to the future, which is what we all ought to do, can he assure the House that the new structure will properly provide for safeguarding the position and legitimate interests of the employees at this headquarters?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for that observation. I can assure him that the restructuring which is taking place at GCHQ is designed to improve the operation of the headquarters as is necessary and improve the pay and conditions of the staff, as can be achieved by restructuring from about 100 grades to about 15 grades in rather different circumstances. That restructuring is available for all those who are serving at GCHQ on the new terms and conditions of service.

Mr. James Callaghan (Cardiff, South and Penarth): The Foreign Secretary has paid tribute to the loyalty of the people at GCHQ. Does he not realise that this disgraceful episode in the Government's record will not be wiped out until every member of GCHQ who desires to join a Civil Service trade union shall be free to do so without fear of intimidation, disciplinary action or dismissal?

Sir Geofrey Howe: I recognise that the view asserted by the right hon. Gentleman, with his characteristic clarity, is a view strongly held. However, alongside that we must set the Government's clear conviction that it was necessary to make changes in the terms and conditions of service at GCHQ in order to assure continuity of operation in that organisation. It is easy now to remember that in the two years between 1979 and 1981 continuity of operation at GCHQ was interrupted seven times, over 10,000 working days were lost and, on one occasion, 25 per cent. of the staff were involved. That is the background against which we took our decision, putting ourselves in line incidentally, with that of a number of other members of the Western Alliance.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Although GCHQ comes under a civil Department, is it not in reality an essential arm of the national defence? That being so, and although I am a trade unionist myself—*[Laughter.]*—which the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) probably is not—may I ask my right hon. and learned Friend whether it would not be more appropriate to have some form of staff federation than a politically oriented trade union organisation?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I acknowledge the force of the point made by my hon. Friend. It is for precisely that reason that the Government Communications Staff Federation has now been formed at GCHQ. It is in response to that federation that the current changes are being undertaken. My hon. Friend is quite correct.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Did we understand the Foreign Secretary to say that, despite the announcement by the Prime Minister two years ago, the polygraph is not to be introduced at Cheltenham?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman will recall that, following the recommendations of the Security Commission after the Prime case, recommendations were then made for experimental tests to be carried out. There have been no final recommendations as a result of those tests. There is no introduction of the polygraph at GCHQ now.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that most people in this country would consider that the first duty of any Government is to protect national security. In the light of what my right hon. and learned Friend has outlined today, can he guarantee that that will take place?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me of the importance of national security. It was, indeed, for that reason that the original decision was taken and is being upheld.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Why does not the Foreign Secretary come clean and admit that the reason why he withdrew the Prime Minister's threat to sack trade unionists at GCHQ was that he knew that there would be massive solidarity action by the rest of the trade union movement the moment one trade unionist was sacked? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman recognise that the real issue is the restoration of trade union rights at GCHQ, and that if he does not restore them, the next Labour Government certainly will?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I recognise that this is an issue on which different opinions are held in different parts of the House. I recognise that that is the policy to which the Labour party is committed. It is our policy, which has been implemented, to secure the withdrawal of trade unionism from GCHQ, and that policy has been carried through and accepted by 99 per cent. of the membership. No doubt that is one of the issues that will be relevant at the next election.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): To what extent have the Government achieved their objective of ending union membership at GCHQ? Is it a fact that 99 per cent. of the people at GCHQ have accepted that approach?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That is precisely the point that I have just made. The Government have achieved their basic objective, which was to free the GCHQ organisation from the threat of future disruption, and over 99 per cent. of the staff have accepted the new conditions.

Mr. Bob Edwards (Wolverhampton, South-East): Is the Foreign Secretary aware that, at a meeting of the

[Mr. Bob Edwards]

Assembly of the Council of Europe, a respected Swiss Member of Parliament suggested that the whole British delegation should be removed because of this massive violation of human rights? Should we not be ashamed that such a situation should ever arise?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not aware of the point raised by the hon. Gentleman, but I have no doubt that several people have expressed a diversity of views on the matter. The Government feel no sense of shame about it, having taken steps to protect national security at an important security agency in line with steps adopted by several of our allies in the Western Alliance.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on the tact and diplomacy with which he has proceeded so far. Does he have any evidence in the past two years that those who have retained union membership have constituted any threat to national security? Secondly, will my right hon. and learned Friend leave the situation as it is at the moment until the European Court of Human Rights has pronounced on the matter?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The first question raised by my hon. Friend relates to details about some individuals. I cannot advance evidence that the individuals concerned have been guilty of any misconduct of the sort about which my hon. Friend complains. That is no part of my case. With regard to my hon. Friend's second point, the announcement that I have made is intended to provide for the stability and security of arrangements at GCHQ for the foreseeable future.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): But does not the Foreign Secretary accept that the saga of GCHQ has already done enormous damage to national security, in the attention that it has drawn to the operations that are carried out there and the harm that it has caused to the morale of the staff working there? Before the matter comes before the European Court of Human Rights, and before we have a further damaging episode in this terrible story, will not the right hon. and learned Gentleman think again?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's general view of the matter. He must remember that it may never come before the European Court of Human Rights, because the case has not yet been accepted.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): When the right hon. and learned Gentleman comes to contemplate his sins of omission and commission as he presents his moral passport to St. Peter, among his many achievements will he not come to consider this episode in his career as disgraceful and dishonourable and forced upon him by his limited and ignorant leader?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not think that when the time comes to present myself before the judgment of St. Peter I shall be much fortified by the advice of St. Andrew.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): What would my right hon. and learned Friend do if the employees who have rejoined a trade union at GCHQ were to grow in number and form a significant minority of the people working there? At that point, would my right hon. and learned Friend feel his original aim of preventing industrial disruption at GCHQ was threatened? What would he do about it?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The point raised by my hon. Friend would postulate an entirely different situation from the present one. It was clear to everyone present at the meeting yesterday that the meeting was concerned with the small group who had rejoined in the circumstances of past months.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Is it correct that a small number of people at GCHQ accepted the Government's money in return for certain obligations, and then appeared to renege on their obligations?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The money was made available specifically in the context of the removal of certain statutory rights at GCHQ. It is certainly the case that a small group, known as the A optant rejoiners, who had originally accepted the Government's offer, subsequently changed their minds and sought to rejoin the unions. In those circumstances we have made these announcements.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): If the Foreign Secretary's answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) about the continuity of operation from 1979 to 1981 is anything approaching the whole truth, why did he not make his announcement about trade unions until January 1984? Does he recollect that I tabled questions about GCHQ on 19 December 1983—long before most hon. Members had heard that there was a dispute? Why was a member of the intelligence services sent to a Labour party meeting on 12 January 1984 at Ardrossan Saltcoats to ask me clearly from where I had information about the sinking of that ship?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman please not go into the detail? We are dealing with the unions, nothing else.

Mr. Dalyell: Briefly, regarding the unions, was it not a dereliction of duty—if what the Foreign Secretary told my right hon. Friend about 1979-81 is anything like true—to do nothing about the matter until the spring of 1984? Why did he suddenly make the announcement without consulting his Cabinet colleagues?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman has had his question answered many times on previous occasions. I cannot begin to recall now the questions that he asked three years ago on matters unrelated to this topic.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We must move on.

Mr. Healey: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption.]* No, this is a point of order. You will recall, Sir, that during the last few minutes the Foreign Secretary has made two incompatible statements to the House. First, he said that the polygraph has not been introduced into GCHQ, and secondly that it has been introduced for experimental purposes and that the decision has not yet been taken whether it will be introduced permanently. Could you give him an opportunity to clear up the confusion, and to tell us which of those statements is true?

Mr. Speaker: I would be responsible only if the polygraph were introduced in the House. However, I shall allow the right hon. and learned Gentleman to respond.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There is no possible mystery about what I said. I said that, on the recommendations of

the Security Commission, a pilot scheme had been undertaken involving the polygraph, the results of which are still being carefully considered.

Immigration (Members' Representations)

3.53 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): On a point of order on a matter relating to the rights of hon. Gentlemen and straight dealing with the House, Mr. Speaker. You may see on page 2394 of the Order Paper question No. 193 in the name of the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) which was tabled yesterday to ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply of 11 February to the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence)

"what representations he has received on the draft guidelines concerning representations made by right hon. and hon. Members in immigration cases; and whether he will make a statement."

Following that response, at the invitation of the Home Secretary, I together with my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) have had two meetings with the Home Secretary on behalf of my hon. Friends in the parliamentary Labour party.

On the second occasion the Home Secretary was accompanied by the Minister of State, the hon. and learned Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington). Following the invitation of the Home Secretary and his statement about his wish for discussions, we had detailed discussions on this matter. When at the end of the second prolonged meeting, I asked the Home Secretary whether he would communicate with me on behalf of my hon. Friends before any further action was taken by him, the Home Secretary gave me a firm assurance that he would communicate with me on the outcome of my discussions with him before any action whatever was taken. The private office of the Home Secretary——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Could the right hon. Gentleman put a point of order to me, because I do not understand what all this is about?

Mr. Kaufman: I am coming directly to the question, Mr. Speaker. I have just been in communication with the private office of the Home Secretary. It has informed me that now—that is, after 3.30—a reply to the question of the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North has been given, together with new draft guidelines which are presumably the outcome of discussions with hon. Members, including myself, yet no communication of any kind has been made to me by the Home Secretary about the outcome of those discussions. For the second time, therefore, we are faced with the situation, the previous occasion having been referred to in the planted question, of the Home Secretary ignoring the rights of the House, ignoring undertakings that he has given to hon. Members and acting unilaterally to provide new guidelines for the House.

This is a breach of faith with hon. Members. It is the latest episode in a shabby and discreditable story. I ask, Mr. Speaker, whether you will direct that, instead of behaving in this underhand way, the Home Secretary must come later today to the House of Commons and make a statement on his lack of plain dealing and his breach of faith.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman knows that I cannot give a direction to the Government on that matter. I notice that the question asks

"what representations he has received."

[Mr. Speaker]

I cannot read into that question anything that the right hon. Gentleman has said. We shall have to wait and see. In any event, it is not a matter for me.

BILL PRESENTED

FORESTRY BILL

Sir John Stradling Thomas, supported by Mr. Robin Corbett, Mr. John Corrie, Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, Mr. Marcus Fox, Dr. Mark Hughes, Sir Anthony Kershaw, Sir Peter Mills, Mr. Donald Stewart and Mr. Tom Torney, presented a Bill to empower the Forestry Commissionners to require the restocking of land with trees after unauthorised felling; and to increase the maximum number of members of regional advisory committees for conservancies designated by those Commissioners: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 18 April and to be printed. [Bill 112].

Opportunities for Young People

3.57 pm

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide employment and other opportunities for young people and for related purposes.

Last year, 1985, was International Youth Year. It was hardly taken up with driving enthusiasm by this Government, who all too often seem to set their face against the principal aims of International Youth Year, which were peace, participation and development. During 1985 it can be argued that the problems which International Youth Year should have addressed grew worse.

The Bill which I am seeking leave to introduce today aims in some small measure to remedy this and to provide some solutions which the Government refuse even to recognise. The principle of the Bill is to extend the opportunities which young people have to allow them to become active members of society rather than passive recipients of pre-packaged solutions. My Bill will therefore seek to give young people wider choice: choice over how they live their lives, choice over how they are governed and choice over how they earn a living.

First, my Bill provides for a youth charter, giving young people the right to be co-opted on to certain statutory bodies, governmental bodies and local authority sub-committees which take vital decisions that affect their lives. The charter will also provide for the establishment of a nationwide network of youth councils, run by young people for young people, giving them another way of making their opinions and priorities known.

Many of the young people whom I meet feel that they are shut out of the process and thinking of Government and that their views and needs are ignored. This youth charter, which is similar to that which my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) introduced last year, would make sure that young people are fully represented. *[Interruption.]*

Conservative Members may have noticed—I gather that they have from some of their mutterings—that several hundred young people have been visiting both Houses of Parliament. I am proud to be the leader of a party which encourages young people to take an active interest in parliamentary democracy. By giving young people a legitimate way of expressing their views and concerns, we shall be reducing the power of those on both the extreme Right and extreme Left to preach violence and confrontation in our society. The best way to defend democracy is to extend democracy, and that is what the Bill seeks to do.

The second element of the Bill is a package of measures to tackle youth unemployment. It is an evil in itself, but it is made doubly evil by the way in which it fuels the feelings of hopelessness and despair that drive so many young people in our large cities to vandalism, crime and drugs.

The need for legislation arises because we need far better training for young men and women. We need training that teaches real skills and leads to real qualifications. I accept that the YTS is improving, but the process is painfully slow and it needs speeding up.

We need further legislation to eliminate some of the abuses which are occurring and to ensure that the YTS and

other Manpower Services Commission schemes, such as the community programme, provide real training and do not degenerate into the creation of work for work's sake. Only yesterday, I received confidential information that the MSC in the Leicester area has been giving instructions to reduce the training element in the community programme by 75 per cent. My Bill aims to stop that sort of thing from happening. It will also ensure that young women receive as good a choice of training opportunities as young men. At present, young women tend to be channelled into administrative and clerical posts while men hog the placements in manufacturing and maintenance work. There must be genuine equality of opportunity.

My Bill seeks to establish all these changes. It will establish a clear framework of vocational qualifications, make better provisions for monitoring the quality of the training that is being provided and ensure that the Equal Opportunities Commission is represented on regional and national MSC boards.

I recognise that there is no point in having a training strategy without an employment strategy. What value there could be in today's YTS is often sapped by the knowledge that all too often there is no job on offer at the end of the scheme, and that the training is merely a rite of passage to the dole queue. That is why in our Budget proposals, and in the alliance's "Worksearch" project, we have shown the Chancellor of the Exchequer how he could, if he were determined to do so and had the necessary political will, be creating employment. I deeply regret that once again yesterday he rejected our advice.

A further problem which young people face is poverty, and the Government have chosen to celebrate the end of International Youth Year by taking steps to make the problem worse. The Social Security Bill, which is currently in Committee, aims deliberately to pay young people, be they unemployed or disabled, a lower rate of benefit than those over 25 years of age. The proposal lacks all merit and logic, so my Bill contains a provision that the same rates of benefit should continue to be paid to everyone over 18 years.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield) *rose*——

Mr. Steel: The final element in my Bill is a simple but important proposal to amend the Education Act 1981 by placing a statutory duty on authorities to provide adequate training facilities for handicapped young people. For far too many such people, education and training ends at 16 years. My Bill will stretch this to 19 years, giving hope and encouragement to a small section of the community which does not fit in with the Government's Devil-take-the-hindmost approach.

Over the last year the problems facing young people have grown worse. Youth unemployment has remained persistently and disgracefully high. Britain's young people deserve better than the Government's hard-hearted indifference and my Bill contains specific proposals that would reverse this drift. This legislative start would set us back on the road to reason and many young people back on the road to hope.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. David Steel, Mr. A. J. Beith, Mr. David Alton, Mr. John Cartwright, Mr. David Penhaligon, Mr. James Wallace, Mr. Clement Freud, Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. Paddy Ashdown, Mr. Archy Kirkwood and Mr. Charles Kennedy.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Mr. David Steel accordingly presented a Bill to provide employment and other opportunities for young people and for related purposes. And the same was read the First time and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 April and to be printed. [Bill 114.]

Mr. Haynes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I took great exception to the Leader of the Liberal party, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Launderdale (Mr. Steel), saying time and time again that this was his Bill. The right hon. Gentleman did not even fetch the Bill. Instead, he sent one of his colleagues to bring it to him.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman had wanted to oppose the right hon. Gentleman's Bill, he could have done so.

Orders of the Day

WAYS AND MEANS

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [18 March].

AMENDMENT OF THE LAW

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the national Debt and public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply;
(b) for refunding any amount of tax;
(c) for varying the rate of that tax otherwise than in relation to all supplies and importations; or
(d) for any relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

Budget Resolutions and Economic Situation

Relevant documents: European Community Document No. 9792/85, Annual Economic Report 1985-86 and the unnumbered document, Annual Economic Report 1985-86 (final version as adopted by the Council).

4.5 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): When, by the weekend, the media froth has been blown away from the statement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the 1986 Budget will be remembered for two characteristics. First, it will be remembered for its essential triviality. It did not even acknowledge, far less attempt to tackle, the three great crises now facing Britain, which are the crisis of unemployment, the crisis of poverty and the crisis of collapsing or collapsed manufacturing industry. That is the inheritance of the first five years of this Conservative Government.

The second characteristic of the Budget is its partiality. It is a divisive Budget. It is a Budget for part of the nation. It is a Budget for men and women with £200 a month to spend on share acquisition. It is a Budget for families who wish to manipulate large estates to avoid death duties. It is a Budget for the stockbrokers, who were seen on television yesterday afternoon going wild with delight when their stamp duty was cut by 50 per cent. Even the change in the basic rate of income tax, which was described yesterday by the Chancellor of the Exchequer as concentrating benefit on the great majority of ordinary taxpayers and not on the rich, has quite the opposite effect from that claimed by the right hon. Gentleman.

The family earning £5,000 a year will be 26p per week better off as a result of the change in the basic rate of income tax. The family on average earnings will be £1·22 better off per week and the family earning £50,000 a year will be £3·30 a week better off. The family living on unemployment benefit will be caught by the indirect tax changes and will be 55p a week worse off as a result of yesterday's Budget.

The basic pattern of Tory taxation policy remains the same: the rich pay less and the rest pay more. Conservative Members will remember that last year, at the Tory party conference, the Prime Minister spoke movingly about the tax problems of a nurse, a teacher and an engineering worker. Ever since then we have followed carefully the fortunes of the three examples that the right hon. Lady quoted. I can tell her—she must know this—that the three categories of people for whom she expressed so much concern last October are still paying more income tax now than they were before she was elected to power. They are paying more as a proportion of their earnings and more in terms of the gross sum than they are required to contribute.

The pattern of Tory taxes is easily described. For taxpayers on ten times the national average income, the tax bill is down by 22 per cent. For taxpayers on average earnings, the tax bill is up by between 1 and 3 per cent. This Conservative Government are the first Government this century to carry out a policy of redistribution by taking from the poor to give to the rich.

Once more the Chancellor has not paid the House the courtesy of attending this debate. If he had wanted to reverse that trend of taking from the poor and giving to the rich, he would not have altered the basic rate at all. His best course would have been to use his £1 billion either to cut unemployment or to increase child benefit. His second best course would have been either to raise the personal allowance or to introduce a reduced rate band. The Chancellor had five options on how he might use the £1 billion which he said yesterday he had found at his disposal. Of the five options, he chose the one which least helps the low wage earner.

The battle over taxation within the Tory party was won by the 1922 Committee and lost by social justice, and so was the battle over unemployment. I know that within the Cabinet and within the Conservative party itself there is a continuing argument about how the Chancellor's resources ought best to be used. It is worth describing to Members of the Conservative party who thought that those resources would be best used to reduce unemployment how the balance has turned out. The net cost of the entire jobs package in yesterday's Budget was less than £100 million. That is not as much as the Chancellor devoted to halving stamp duty and reducing capital transfer tax.

If that is the Chancellor's order of priorities, no wonder unemployment rises month by month and looks as if it will remain stubbornly, on honest figures, at 3·5 million or more at the time of the next general election. It is no wonder that the job start pilot schemes about which the noble Lord in another place will be saying a great deal on television this evening have produced only 70 jobs in total in nine areas. I understand that in one area the pilot scheme has created only one job, and that is the job of interviewing non-existent applicants for the pilot scheme.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Does the right hon. Gentleman not understand that only part of the job start scheme is a £20 a week top-up? The other part is calling in and identifying the longer-term unemployed and giving them personal counselling and help. Is he not aware that 80 per cent. of those who go into that scheme think that the interview and the help are worth while?

Mr. Hattersley: I am aware that the scheme for identifying the long-term unemployed and giving them counselling and help is not only deeply patronising to the long-term unemployed, but demonstrates a deep ignorance of the problem. The problem is not that the long-term

unemployed do not know how to find jobs; the problem is that there are no jobs to find. That is particularly true in the hon. Gentleman's area. The same thing applies to the job clubs, where, as I understand it, young people come together and discuss why it is that they are out of work. They know why they are out of work: it is because of Government policies.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): The right hon. Gentleman says that only 70 jobs have so far been found by way of these pilot schemes. I am happy to be able to tell him that when I made a telephone call to my local jobcentre at Crawley, an area of the country in which there is relatively high employment, I found that out of 555 people interviewed, more than half had been found jobs.

Mr. Hattersley: I wish the same could be said for the area represented by the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon). These schemes will help people who might well have got jobs anyway in areas where job opportunities already exist. The idea that the schemes will make a significant inroad into the unemployment levels typifies the paucity of Government thinking on this matter. It is all the more unacceptable to us because if the Government had chosen to do so we could have had a real jobs programme.

An additional reason why we might have had an effective jobs programme is the reduction in oil costs, which, whatever temporary inconvenience it causes to Britain and the Chancellor, offers the hope of increased world demand, increased world output and increased world trade. The Chancellor ought to have taken advantage of all those things to mend his ways and attempt an economic breakout.

The Chancellor was wholly wrong yesterday, and must know that he was wholly wrong, to say that as we have survived a reduction of 50 per cent. in oil revenues in 25 weeks we will easily be able to accommodate the reduction of the other 50 per cent. of our benefits in 25 years. The comparison is clearly absurd. The general cut in oil prices over the last three months helps all industrial countries by promoting trade. Therefore, it compensates economies like ours which both use and produce oil. On the other hand, the gradual exhaustion of British oil simply harms Britain, and the certainty that one day our oil will run out makes an industrial policy vital.

The Chancellor fails to recognise that a fall in oil prices means that this is the moment when an industrial policy should be used to maximum benefit. British manufacturing industry should be able to take maximum advantage of the new opportunities that a reduction in costs and an increase in trade provide. Unfortunately, because of the ravages of the last six years, that will not be so. The decline in manufacture has left us perilously dependent on oil revenue—vulnerable to the loss of income, instead of poised to take advantage of the fall in oil prices.

The improvement in manufacturing productivity about which the Chancellor tells us day after day, and in speech after speech, has been achieved at the expense of a disastrous loss of capacity and disastrous losses of output and jobs. Unless the Government change course we will remain incapable of taking advantage of what ought to be a stimulus to growth. I fear that the chances of that change in course taking place are gloomily remote, not least because the Government in general, and the Chancellor in particular, seem wholly incapable of recognising the failures of the last six years.

Many of the improved prospects which we should now begin to exploit, and which the Chancellor was happy to brag about in his speech yesterday, are the direct result of economic changes which the Government first opposed and then failed to prevent. I repeat that I see the reduction in oil prices as offering us a new long-term prospect. That price reduction was welcomed by the Prime Minister in her party speech on Saturday, but three months ago the Government's plans for tax cuts were based wholly on the hope that oil prices would stay firm and stay high.

A depreciation of sterling, which would make our exports more competitive, has been held back by the Government. When my right hon. Friends and I have urged a depreciation and an end to the fall in competitiveness to which over-high exchange rates lead, we have been attacked and excoriated by the Government. Yet now that has become an incentive to exporters and one of the Chancellor's achievements. For far too long the exchange rate was held above its proper level by ruinously high interest rates.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): What is the proper level?

Mr. Hattersley: I should have known better than to give way to the hon. Gentleman—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] The proper level is the level at which British exporters can maximise their sales potential. The CBI and everybody involved in manufacturing industry will say that the rates have been held artificially high for far too long by the Government's intentional policy of keeping interest rates high as well.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: Even now, interest rates in this country are far too high. Even now, interest rates stand at a level that penalises industrial investment and pauperises many owner-occupiers. Today, interest rates stand at a level that was inconceivable before the Conservative party was elected, and at a level that is much higher than the level of real interest in our competitor economies. That is wholly true——

Mr. Richard Ryder (Mid-Norfolk): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: I shall not give way in the middle of a sentence.

The height of our interest rates and the extent of the burden that they place on industry and owner-occupiers remain intolerable despite the 1 per cent. reduction in base rate that was announced this morning. During the debate Conservative Members will no doubt cheer and welcome a real interest rate of 8 per cent., but they will merely be showing their relief that a tragedy has turned simply into a disaster.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: Our interest rate was higher than the rates in our competitor economies a month ago. Those countries reduced their interest rates, while we reduced ours belatedly to a point at which we are still running 1 or 2 per cent. higher than theirs in real terms. This morning the interest rate was managed down by the Bank of England to help the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Ryder *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: Indeed, I told the Chancellor of the Exchequer that that would happen during last Thursday's

[Mr. Hattersley]

Question Time. The interest rate was managed down this morning, in order to help the Chancellor, by the Bank of England cutting the dealing rate by 1 per cent., but it should have been managed down a month ago to help the British economy.

Yesterday the Chancellor of the Exchequer once again dangled before us the prospect of massive tax cuts. It is difficult to focus on his long-running fantasy, but it is clear that if there are massive tax cuts next year they will be wholly dependent upon, and financed by, the sale of British Gas, British Telecom and other national assets. Yesterday the Chancellor spoke about how he had held down the total of Government spending and Government indebtedness. By a slip of the memory, or some error in his notes, he did not mention the £4·75 billion that he intends to obtain from asset sales. The truth is that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has financed his Budget deficit by selling national assets.

Selling assets and gilts is simply an alternative way of financing a Budget deficit. However, when, as is the Government's practice, assets are priced below their true value and priced, if the Government are true to form, at about £3 billion below their true value to ensure a quick sale, that is not a prudent way of raising revenue, but is a wilful waste of taxpayers' money.

The Chancellor apparently wants to know whether I wish to increase the Budget deficit. I have no complaint about his increasing the Budget deficit. But why, having increased the Budget deficit, did the right hon. Gentleman choose to use it to finance tax cuts rather than jobs? Why does the right hon. Gentleman have such an obsession with people's capitalism and so little interest in people's jobs?

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): Without asset sales—which a Labour Government would not have—next year's PSBR would be projected at £12 billion. That would be the starting point for the right hon. Gentleman. How much higher could he safely go?

Mr. Hattersley: I shall give the figure in a moment. For the time being, the answer is "Considerably," and I shall justify that shortly. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman at least, if not the Chancellor of the Exchequer, understands that asset sales and other means of supporting the national debt involve exactly the same economic operation.

Before dealing precisely and directly with the question of the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples), I must deal with the Government's plans for tackling the unemployment crisis. The planned increase in all the special employment schemes announced yesterday amounts to 90,000 jobs. That is 90,000 on an unemployment total which, by honest calculation, is nearer 4 million than 3 million. We are talking about 90,000 jobs, when unemployment rose by 130,000 in January alone. Similar schemes to those announced by the Chancellor were announced last year. Indeed, yesterday the Chancellor persisted in including the schemes announced last year in the figures that he gave, as if they were all for this year. Since the announcement of those schemes, unemployment has risen by 228,000. Indeed, every time the Government announce a new remedy for unemployment, unemployment increases.

There was a time when transferring assets from public to private use would automatically reduce unemployment, but unemployment has increased. There was a time when reducing inflation would reduce unemployment, but unemployment has increased. There was a moment when appointing Lord Young as a Minister would reduce unemployment, but unemployment has increased. The truth, as typified by Lord Young's appointment, is that the Government are engaged not in an assault on the level of unemployment but in an assault on the unemployment statistics.

Even the Government's plans for changing the married man's tax allowance are calculated to keep married women off the labour market. The Government now believe that what no doubt in their private moments they call a pool of unemployment of 3 million or more is inevitable. That is not our view. We believe that we can begin to put Britain back to work, but we can do so only if we escape from two debilitating prejudices. The first is the obsession with the PSBR—an affliction which so grievously affects the Government. It is now generally accepted that the PSBR is a wholly inadequate measurement of Government borrowing. Setting policy by the ratio of Government borrowing to national income is a far more responsible way of determining the fiscal stance and is the method employed in many economies more successful than ours. Were we to employ that technique, I believe that it would make us more clearly understand that there are times in the life of an economy, as there are in the life of a family or of a company, when borrowing for investment is the prudent option, and that failing to borrow is the profligate alternative.

We must abandon the second prejudice—which in one sense is not so much a prejudice as a pretence—that unemployment costs nothing. It costs the Exchequer £21 billion a year in lost taxes and benefits paid. It costs the economy a further £30 billion a year in lost output. Perhaps more important is the simple fact that to reject borrowing as a means of financing a massive job-creating programme is to accept unemployment remaining at 3 million or 3·5 million for the rest of this decade and beyond. That is the choice, and the Government do themselves no credit by pretending that they have some other way of gradually putting Britain back to work. They have not. On present policies, there will be no significant fall in unemployment before the next election or beyond.

The drive to create jobs could begin now. There should be public sector capital programmes doing vital and necessary work, at a net cost of £1 billion a year, which would reduce unemployment by 67,000 in two years. There should be public sector service employment, making additions to the nursing, midwifery and home-help service, reducing unemployment by 100,000 in two years, and costing a further £1 billion. There should be reductions in national insurance, something which was flaunted by the Government two months ago and then abandoned, at a net cost of £1·5 billion a year. We could reduce unemployment by 200,000 in two years. There ought to be a job guarantee scheme based on that recommended by the all-party Select Committee on Employment, which would build up, as it calculates, to a cost of £3·3 billion, and which would result in a reduction in registered unemployed of 750,000 in three years.

The cost of the proposals is less than 1·6 per cent. of gross domestic product, and it is wholly consistent with a broadly stable debt to income ratio. That ought to have been the central theme of the Chancellor's budget.

The second theme ought to have been help for those members of the community who need most help—the pensioners, the families, and the long-term unemployed. If, as I and as my party believe, the national resources that are available were concentrated, to the exclusion of other objectives, on the reduction of long-term unemployment, the anti-poverty programme — the schemes to help pensioners, families and the long-term unemployed— would be self-financing, and would have to be financed from within the tax and benefit system itself — by redistribution.

Pensions should be increased by £5 a week for a single pensioner and by £8 for a married couple. Those increases would more than restore the link between pensions and earnings. Child benefits should be increased by £3, and supplementary benefit, at the full rate, should be made available to the long-term unemployed.

It is intolerable that long-term unemployment, which denies those who have been out of work for a year or more their skills, often their self-respect, and their hope, should also in the end deny them the proper rate of unemployment benefit. We would, and could, provide it, along with help for the pensioners and for families, at a cost of £3·45 billion. That would include the additions to supplementary benefit, to ensure for the pensioners that what we gave with one hand we would not take away with the other.

Fortunately, that sum is readily available. While the nation as a whole is paying an annual tax bill of £30 billion higher than it was in 1979, the richest 5 per cent. are paying less. The richest 5 per cent. are paying £3·64 billion a year less than they were when the Prime Minister was elected, when she promised to cut everybody's taxes, but not the taxes of the richest 5 per cent.

Those cuts have not come simply in income tax alone. There have been a wide variety of concessions to the richest 5 per cent. There were 15 concessions in 1980 alone, and the concessions to this favoured group have averaged five a year throughout the life of this Government.

Yesterday, on a quick calculation, there were nine. I make a simple point, which I think Conservative Members may find it difficult to dispute. The richest 5 per cent. of the population should at least be making their proper contribution to the national well-being. It is intolerable that when poor people are paying more, rich people are paying less.

During this three-day Budget debate I shall look forward to hearing an argument which says that we should reduce the taxes of the rich and increase the taxes of men and women on average earnings. It is intolerable that the wealthy should have been uniquely benefited in this way, not least because tax cuts cannot be isolated from the rest of the policy. By cutting the taxes of the rich, the Government have been forced to hold back benefits from pensioners, from families and from the long-term unemployed.

Taxpayers earning £50,000 a year or more, have received from the Government an annual tax reduction of £1 billion, while pensioners are living on £40 a week, and dying from hypothermia because they cannot afford their fuel bills.

The truth is that there cannot be any escape from the choice. We must decide whether cutting the tax on unearned income, or increasing child benefit, is the most important objective. We must decide whether abandoning capital gains tax and capital transfer tax, or helping pensioners, is the first priority. For us the priority is the pensioner, the long-term unemployed, and the child.

I end on a charitable note towards the Chancellor. I want to conclude on the wild assumption that his predictions of economic success—so wrong in the past —will this year be justified. Even if I make the wild hypothesis that the great breakthrough that he has recognised has come, that continued expansion of the economy is certain, and that continuing improvement in prosperity is not now in dispute, how will those successes affect the pensioners, the unemployed and the poor?

We know that they will not affect pensioners at all, for they have formally been excluded from any improvement in national prosperity, by the break in the link between pensions and earnings. We know that the number of families living in poverty increased by 1·5 million between 1979 and 1981, and then the Government stopped counting. We know from the pattern of taxes which the Chancellor has proposed, and from the holding down of benefits for which he is responsible, that the number of families living below the National Health Service poverty line will increase.

We also know that, despite his claims, unemployment at the next election will be 3·5 million to 4 million on the honest calculation that was made by previous Governments before the figures were manipulated.

The truth is that for those groups — even if the Chancellor's shop-soiled braggadocio turns out to be true —there is nothing in this Budget and nothing in this Government's policy. The truth is that the Chancellor has wilfully failed the pensioners, the long-term unemployed, the families and the poor. By failing them he has failed the nation, and the nation will make him pay the price.

4.40 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John MacGregor): The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) finished with a forecast— rather a more shaky forecast than one is accustomed to hearing from him. I can understand why, because his record on forecasts and on understanding the underlying economic situation, has always been shaky. Just before the last election, he predicted that with our policies, inflation would soon be rising to double figures. It never did. It never has.

Only two months ago in the House the right hon. Gentleman raised under Standing Order No. 10 the urgent issue that there would be an imminent increase in real interest rates, which he described as being a matter that is directly within the responsibility of the Government. There was not, and the House knows today that the actual change is in the reverse direction.

So it was in approaching this Budget. Although the dramatic fall in oil prices has been good for British industry and for our economy, the right hon. Gentleman thought—there was a hint of it in what he said today— that it was really bad news for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, because of the known and substantial loss of oil tax revenue. He hoped that that would have completely destroyed any room for manoeuvre in this Budget—or that, if my right hon. Friend wished to find scope for tax cuts or other new initiatives, that could be achieved only by substantial increases in indirect taxes over and above inflation, especially on petrol.

[Mr. John MacGregor]

That is no doubt why the right hon. Gentleman encouraged his right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition to make the theme of his response yesterday jam tomorrow, because he thought that the Chancellor was in a jam today. But as the Budget unfolded, it became clear that my right hon. Friend was not in a jam. He was able to reduce both direct taxes and the borrowing forecast for next year, thus maintaining prudent and responsible control over the economy, without any increase in the real burden of indirect taxes — thereby ensuring that the benefit of the recent drop in oil prices remains with both industry and private motorists.

My right hon. Friend was able to announce a series of imaginative and innovative measures to promote enterprise, to spread share ownership and to help charities. He was able to agree to additional employment measures on top of the very large sums that we are spending already within our planning totals. Because of this prudent management, we now learn that interest rates have come down by one percentage point today, bringing further benefits to businesses and to families throughout the land.

The right hon. Gentleman talked a great deal about real interest rates, but the combination under the Labour Government was very high interest rates and even higher inflation. That combination was lethal.

Mr. Hattersley: The right hon. Gentleman makes this point every week, I ask him a question every week, and perhaps he will give us the answer today. Was the real interest rate ever as high under the Labour Government as it is now?

Mr. MacGregor: There was a very simple reason. The right hon. Gentleman's Government had such an enormously high level of inflation, and the right hon. Gentleman always tells us that high inflation destroys jobs.

All this is a direct result of the underlying strength of the economy. The right hon. Gentleman called the Budget staggeringly trivial. He got it staggeringly wrong, because he staggeringly misunderstood the situation. He concentrated a great deal on manufacturing industry, so I shall respond to that point. However, we all recognise that there are many other aspects of the economy that are every bit as significant, including the £6 billion a year in invisible earnings that the City brings in and which the right hon. Gentleman denigrates so much.

Let us look at the record on industry and at some of the critical factors. The real rate of return of industrial and commercial companies rose to 8 per cent. in 1985—the highest level since 1973. Manufacturing profitability also reached its highest point since 1973. One of the most devastating symptoms of Britain's industrial decline in the 1970s was that we had far too low a rate of profitability.

The Opposition parties talk much of more investment going into research and development. This increase in profitability will enable that to happen. To judge from the record of the Government of which the right hon. Gentleman was a member, he and his colleagues may not think that company profitability matters and that it is somehow wrong for real profitability to return to this country. It is not wrong; it is essential. It is the engine of future investment and jobs, and of confidence among those with the capital available to invest in the future of this country.

It is quite clear that the Labour party simply does not understand that the return of profitability, and real rates of return at decent levels to industry and commerce, is one of the signs that the real economy is getting stronger. The signs can also be seen in investment. Total fixed investment rose by 8 per cent. in real terms in 1984 to reach an all-time high. Some further increase is expected to have occurred in 1985, and we expect another 5 per cent. increase in 1986. Total business investment went up 10 per cent. in 1984 and a further 2 per cent. in 1985. It is expected to grow 5 per cent. more in 1986. I can understand why the right hon. Gentleman does not want to listen to good news. This investment is happening now, and every increase in investment means that the economy is getting stronger.

The signs of what is really happening can also be seen in the balance of trade. The current account surplus was £3 billion in 1985—the sixth successive year of surplus. Since 1981, United Kingdom manufacturing exports in volume terms have increased their share of world trade. We are taking on the competition and matching it. That is a measure of our new strength, and what a welcome change it is from the story of earlier years, when our share of world trade in manufacturing was constantly declining.

Underlying these successes are the real changes that companies have made to become competitive. The number of industrial disputes in 1985 was the lowest for 50 years, and productivity—where we have lagged behind for so long — is rising steadily. Since 1979, manufacturing productivity has increased by around 3·5 per cent. every year, compared with 1 per cent. between 1974 and 1979. This means that our productivity has improved more than in France, Germany and the United States—more signs that we are again getting stronger.

Above all, we must never forget the essential part played by the reduction in inflation achieved by this Government's policies.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Will not the right hon. Gentleman give appropriate recognition to the fact that the rise in productivity is generally taken to be a consequence of producing 6 per cent. fewer goods with 25 per cent. fewer workers?

Mr. MacGregor: Since 1981, after the world recession had been got out of the way and we had dealt with the inheritance we faced, productivity has increased even more, with increases in manufacturing output every year. The right hon. Gentleman still fails to understand the significance for the long-term strength of the economy of achieving that level of increased productivity.

The devastating effect of high and fluctuating rates of inflation on industry, trade, commerce and confidence —and hence on jobs—can scarcely be measured. That is why the reductions in inflation are so important to the long-term strength of the economy. The right hon. Gentleman used to agree with that.

The fact that we could take further steps in all the directions that my right hon. Friend announced yesterday is another illustration of the underlying strength that our policies have brought to the economy. That strength allowed us to see through a year-long coal strike and a spectacular shift in oil prices, and still to keep on course.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): My right hon. Friend properly mentioned profitability, which is so important to manufacturing

industry. We all want to see increased profitability. Does he agree that one of the wise things that the Chancellor did yesterday was to put the price of oil up by only 7½p—which was meant to come out of the excess profits of the oil companies—when the price could have come down by 12p. Will he try to ensure that profitability for manufacturing companies is not made up by profiteering by the monopoly oil companies? Can we be firm with them, as we were with the banks, and see that if they do not play the right game they have to pay excess profits tax, so that they serve the people and do not just profiteer?

Mr. MacGregor: I certainly hope that many of the comments that have been made will be noted by the oil companies. I believe that we shall now see considerable competition at the pumps throughout this country and that this will have an impact in ensuring what my right hon. Friend said yesterday that he hoped for.

Having talked about the underlying strength of the economy, I turn now to what I regard as three of the major themes of this year's Budget. This Budget marks a further step in our programme of reducing the burden of income tax on the British people, despite the constricting circumstances resulting from the loss of north sea oil revenue.

Our reasons are well known. Income tax as a proportion of most people's earnings has increased enormously over the years. Tax and national insurance paid by a married couple on average earnings was about 29 per cent. last year —double the share taken in tax at the end of the 1950s. It is therefore still too high, and I hope that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) will support us in all the efforts that we are making to get it down.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook referred to the burden of tax compared with 1979. What in fact matters is a person's take-home pay. Let me take the case of the real take-home pay for a married man with two children, on average earnings. His real take-home pay will be up by over 17 per cent. in 1986-87 compared with 1978-79. Under the Labour Government, from 1973 to 1979, the same person saw his real take-home pay grow by only 0·5 per cent.

Mr. Hattersley: Could the Chief Secretary tell us if he is glad or sorry about the figures that he has just given us, since yesterday the Chancellor of the Exchequer was urging people to keep their wage claims down?

Mr. MacGregor: Obviously, there is increased revenue when pay increases. The real problem—I will come to this later—is that our greatest danger is the increase in unit labour costs. One of the very important points about the changes in income tax is that they will help to ease that problem of increasing unit labour costs. What the right hon. Gentleman said about the burden of tax means, I hope, that he will continue to support us in our efforts to get it down.

We want to enlarge the area of personal choice so that individuals are able to keep more of what they earn and to spend it as they wish, including, if they choose, important areas of expenditure which the Labour party would see as the preserve of central Government alone, using, of course, the taxpayers' money.

Moreover, the evidence suggests that excessive tax rates damage economic performance. There are many reasons why this may be so. Higher taxes on individuals lead to the problems of the poverty trap, with which we are all familiar, the compression of incentives for those in work and the reduction in incentives to take jobs at all. High taxes on employers increase their costs relative to international competitors and reduce the number of jobs that they can afford to offer—a point which the right hon. Gentleman completely ignored. Above all, there is the stifling, crushing effect of high taxes on enterprise, on the activity of creating new businesses, on which lasting jobs and future prosperity depend. So much for the principle.

There are several features of this year's income tax changes which I should like to single out.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn) *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I really cannot give way again. I have already given way a great deal. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The Minister has made it clear that he is not giving way.

Mr. MacGregor: I want to make some very important points about these income tax changes.

Mr. Straw: It is a matter of record that the shadow Chancellor gave way on a number of occasions to Back Benchers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is a matter for the hon. Member who has the floor whether he gives way.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Is it not a fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this is the Budget debate and that it is right and proper that the Minister give way and be cross-examined on the proposals of the Government?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is well known to the House that it is a matter for whichever hon. Member has the floor whether he gives way, but I have noticed that the right hon. Gentleman has given way frequently.

Mr. MacGregor: I am very grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have given way frequently. I know that many people want to speak, and my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will happily answer points made in the debate. There are many points that I want to make and I do not want to take too long.

I want to single out several features of this year's income tax changes and to begin by stressing that the gains, compared to indexation, have been quite deliberately concentrated on the vast majority of ordinary taxpayers, those in the broad income band fluctuating around the average—in other words, from well below average earnings to twice such earnings. I noted in some of the pre-Budget comments doubts about reducing direct tax rates because, so it was thought, this would particularly benefit the higher paid. The House will have noted that we have deliberately skewed the changes so that it does not do so. Those at the top of the earnings scale broadly get no greater gain than they would have got from simple indexation of allowances.

Those in all income ranges have seen their income tax reduced in real terms as a percentage of their tax liability compared to the last year of the Labour Government after adjusting for inflation, in other words, assuming normal indexation since that year. That is another response to the right hon. Gentleman. Until this Budget, the percentage tax reduction had been greatest at both ends of the income scale, but for those within the income ranges of £5,000 and £20,000 the percentage income tax reduction was less than for all the others. That is one reason why there was a strong

[Mr. MacGregor]

case for concentrating on this large income band, for whom the 1p reduction in the basic rate means most. It was their turn.

This brings me to the rates v. threshold argument. In choosing to make a 1p reduction in the basic rate this year the Government are not saying that basic rate reductions are in some sense better than threshold increases. The fact is that we need both as part of our programme of reducing the burden of tax. Our record shows the importance we attach to raising the threshold. The basic allowances will be over 22 per cent. higher in real terms next year than they were in 1978-79. This substantial increase in allowances means that there are 1·4 million fewer taxpayers than if we had merely indexed the 1978-79 regime. It means also that the real value of the married man's allowance is the highest since 1945.

In the Green Paper on personal tax reform, which my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will be dealing with later, we described a possible strategy for the future. One of the main purposes of the paper is to show how we could increase thresholds in a way that is more cost-effective and gives more help to those whose family commitments are high. It shows that our long-term objective continues to be to make further substantial increases in allowances. All this demonstrates our commitment to thresholds.

It is time, however, that something more was done about the basic rate. It gives help to very large numbers of people on a very wide range of incomes. It is bound to do so, when some 95 per cent. of taxpayers pay at the basic rate. For all those taxpayers, their marginal rate will fall, so incentives will improve. The argument about marginal rates is a very important one in the context of the economy.

The reduction in the basic rate, moreover, is of greater benefit than an increase in allowances, for the same overall cost, for single people and married women with incomes as low as £115 a week. This is little more than half average earnings. It is of greater benefit for married men earning £180 a week, which is still well below male average earnings.

Let me just take the single person earning £140 a week to whom the right hon. Gentleman referred. Everyone agrees that he or she is paying too much tax. I suspect that in most people's minds that person is thought to benefit more from higher thresholds than from the basic rate reduction. On the contrary, that person will gain 95p a week from the reduction in the basic rate, compared with 69p a week for an equal-cost increase in allowances. I might add that, as a direct result of this Budget, he will have £1.70 more in his pay packet, and for a married man on average earnings the figure is £2.59. That, of course, comes on top of all the other benefits that will ensue from the Budget. So that is another argument for doing something about the basic rate this year.

A basic rate reduction also helps small businesses and the self-employed. I know only too well the argument which is sometimes deployed — that we have greatly helped the small incorporated business by big reductions in the small business rate of corporation tax, and that all other businesses have benefited by having the lowest rate of corporation tax — at 35 per cent. — in any major industrial country. The self-employed and our unincorporated businesses do not feel that they have always benefited to the same extent.

In fact, 90 per cent. of all self-employed non-incorporated businesses have earnings at the basic rate of tax. This 1 per cent. reduction in the basic rate will be of particular benefit to them, on top of all the other measures we have taken for them. It will enable the small business rate of corporation tax to come down again.

The basic rate reduction helps with one other issue of great importance which the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook raised in his last question. The House is well aware that one of the greatest threats to jobs in this country today is the fact that our labour costs have been rising faster than those of our major competitors. I make no apology for emphasising the latest figures yet again. In the 12 months to the third quarter of 1985, unit labour costs in manufacturing in this country rose by 6·25 per cent. In the United States they rose by 2 per cent., in Germany by 1 per cent. and in Japan by 0·5 per cent.

For the employee on average earnings, the reduction in the basic rate of tax plus the increase in thresholds is the equivalent of £4 a week increase in gross pay. That is a pay increase which does not damage the competitiveness of British industry and does not put other people's jobs or that employee's job at risk.

As the CBI has acknowledged, it is essential that we bring our increase in labour costs more into line with those of our competitors through realistic and sensible pay settlements. The Budget—I notice that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is not listening; I am about to answer his question fully—through direct tax changes, through its encouragement of lower inflation and through its assistance in lowering mortgage rates, which were decreased today, has greatly helped that process. I hope that employers and employees will take note and act accordingly.

I turn to my second theme — enterprise and job measures. Of course, we all want the level of unemployment to be brought down, but the Government at least recognise the formidable nature of the challenge, which is a worldwide one, in the face of the increasing impact of technology, the increased threats from greater competitiveness in our own and world markets from more and more newly industrialising countries and the problem of coping with substantial increases in the potential work force — an all-time high in Britain of some 510,000 extra in 1984, which was a point conveniently forgotten by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook.

Faced with all these, we have made considerable progress, with more new jobs being created in Britain since the last election than in the rest of the Community put together. My right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General and Minister for Employment will elaborate on that aspect if he catches your eye tomorrow, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Straw: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall not give way, for the reason I explained earlier.

Mr. Straw: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. MacGregor: I should like to confine myself to three comments.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I have been giving way a great deal.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not customary and courteous for a Minister who has named a Labour Member to give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member well knows that it is for the hon. Member who has the Floor to decide whether to give way.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Blackburn just this once, and then I must continue.

Mr. Straw: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the name of the Paymaster General appears on the proposals of the Tory Reform Group which called for job creation before taxation cuts and for an increase in spending of £3 billion? What answer has the right hon. Gentleman given to the Paymaster General and the other two Cabinet Ministers whose names appear on the front of that document?

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General will make it clear himself that he was not part of the process of developing those policies and will give a very satisfactory answer tomorrow. My right hon. and learned Friend was not involved in framing that set of proposals.

I should like to confine myself to three comments on the employment side. First, the employment and training measures currently pursued by the Government are much wider and more extensive than ever before. We are planning to spend about £2·5 billion in 1986-87 on those measures, increasing to nearly £3 billion in 1988, compared with £300 million in the last year of the last Government. The bulk of the benefits from last year's Budget are only now beginning to work through. That is not surprising. The restructuring of national insurance contributions came into effect only last October. The two-year YTS begins next month, and the expansion of the community programme is only part way through. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor was therefore right to include those measures in considering the effects on employment in the coming year.

The new measures announced yesterday, at some £195 million gross, are on top of all that, so it is ridiculous to describe them as the response to the problem of the unemployed. They are in addition to everything else that has been and is being done.

Moreover — this is very important — we have concentrated on those measures which have been proved to be the most cost-effective. It is, of course, only too easy for one to promise to spend much more of the taxpayers' money on such schemes and to claim that in that way one was making a greater Government contribution to jobs, but it is false. What matters is that we ensure that this is the best use of taxpayers' money and that it is effectively spent. The Opposition constantly fail to take into account the fact that every £100 million spent on such employment measures comes from other businesses and other people in employment. Squeeze them too hard by higher taxes or higher interest rates and one destroys hundreds of thousands of jobs which would otherwise be lasting.

Secondly, as a former Minister with responsibility for small businesses, I am delighted to see the emphasis on measures to promote enterprise, to encourage small businesses and to assist self-employment. Two of the schemes for which I had initial responsibility — the enterprise allowance scheme and the loan guarantee scheme—have proved themselves, and I am sure that all my right hon. and hon. Friends will welcome their extension in the Budget.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I am delighted, too, that another scheme in which I took particularly close interest, the business expansion scheme, has received the thumbs up from the Peat Marwick report and is being extended indefinitely. I welcome, too, the fact that the Leader of the Opposition has recognised its value and supported what we have proposed in the Budget.

The CTT changes are important in this context, because their main effect will be to help the family businesses. There is little incentive to build up a family business beyond a certain scale if it cannot be passed on to the next generation without heavy tax bills on transfer. Increasingly, it has become clear that the effect of the lifetime gifts provision was to prevent new jobs being created. It led, possibly because of the need to meet tax bills, to the actual loss of many existing jobs. I hope that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook will reflect on that point if he concludes that he wants to oppose the proposal.

Thirdly, it is nonsense to suggest that the only impact of this Budget on jobs will be through the specific employment measures. Expenditure is only part of the story. The Opposition live under the delusion that Governments alone can create jobs by spending other people's money. We disagree. Lasting jobs are created by business success in the market place — by businesses producing goods and services which people want to buy and which they will have more money to buy after the Budget.

For me, the third main theme of the Budget is the further encouragement it gives to wider share ownership. For many years, I was an active member of the Wider Share Ownership Council, and, like my right hon. Friends, I have a passionate belief in seeing the capital-owning democracy, begun with the massive extension of home ownership, augumented by as many of our fellow citizens as possible being able to build up investments of their own, over and above their pensions and life policies, to enhance their financial independence of the state and to spread the investment habit.

We have built on the success of previous Budgets, of privatisation and of increased employee participation. We are breaking down the old demarcation between capital and labour. I am therefore delighted at the warm welcome —with the obvious exception of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook—given to my right hon. Friend's radical new scheme, the personal equity plan. It is important that the tax advantages hitherto given to institutional investors are counterbalanced. Small investors will now be able to build up substantial nest eggs for their retirement, to complement their pensions or for other purposes. More and more of our fellow citizens are increasingly coming to see that share ownership is just as natural and just as realistic an ambition as home ownership. I hope that this new scheme will help to turn those ambitions into reality.

Of course, I did not expect Labour Members to understand or welcome the new scheme. At heart, the Labour party believes in the municipal Socialism of the town hall landlord and the central Socialism of the man in Whitehall. On this matter, philosophically and in practice,

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there is a fundamental divide between the parties, and this Budget has intensified it. Not so long ago the Labour party showed itself to be out of touch with the aspiration of people to own their own homes when it opposed the sale of council houses. It had to come round to that because of its popularity. I tell hon. Members that the time for people's capitalism has come.

Something of the same spirit underlies the Budget proposals on charities. Of course, this Government have done much in successive Budgets already to help charities, but this is far and away the best Budget ever for them. My right hon. Friend has given an enormous boost to charities with the imaginative steps he is now taking. A vast range of activities are affected—good social causes, the arts, conservation, the heritage, education, including universities, medical research and the Third world. Of course, the proposals have been welcomed on all sides, and give charities the opportunity to attract a huge surge in charitable giving, estimated to be at least £120 million by next year, and perhaps more.

It is not just the national organisations which will benefit. I expect that there will be a significant boost to many county and small local charities and charitable activities and events, in my own county and constituency as in those of my hon. Friends, and not least to the churches, with the money coming from local employers and employees.

For me too there is a wider significance. There is state funding on a substantial scale for many of these purposes, and it will continue. But the decisions in practice are very often concentrated in a few hands, and very much focused on the centre. Letting individuals and companies decide what they want to give to, and to whom they want to give it, means that decisions are diffused throughout the community, are in as many hands as possible and have a strong regional and local focus. We have always supported an active and flourishing voluntary sector. These measures should reinvigorate it.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): As chairman of a national charity for mentally handicapped people, may I say that the proposals by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will without doubt enable us greatly to extend the recreational and sporting facilities for large numbers of mentally handicapped children who otherwise would not be assisted?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend; I entirely agree with him. Although the charitable proposals have had a wide welcome, I suspect that their real significance and impact have not yet sunk in. They are a major step forward for all charitable and voluntary activities.

The Budget documents this year do not announce any new major developments in public expenditure. The planning totals have not been changed from those set out in the White Paper and the package of employment measures will be met from the reserve. There should be no criticism of that. As we get nearer to the year in question, we are able to respond to changing circumstances by switching some resources from the reserve to specific programmes while remaining within the totals which we have set.

The essence of sound control is, as the Green Paper on the longer term expressed it,

"to establish a clear view of what can be afforded, set out our spending plans accordingly, then to stick to those plans".

That is precisely what we are doing.

Whereas in the autumn statement and in the public expenditure White Paper we expected the outturn for 1985-86 to be at the level of the planning total, we now expect it to be slightly below. That will no doubt surprise those who last autumn took the view that our determination to achieve the planning totals was no more than a pious hope which would be rapidly undermined in practice. But it shows that, far from it being a case of virtue tomorrow, good housekeeping and proper restraint of public expenditure are being practised right now.

How important it is that that good housekeeping should be maintained. For it has been the soundness of public finances, together with the underlying strength of the economy, which has enabled us to weather the huge fall in oil prices and its impact on Government revenues, to achieve yesterday's Budget and to make possible the interest rate fall today.

There could be no greater contrast than that between our plans and those of the right hon. Gentleman. Where we offer consistency and realism, he offers inconsistency and, as has been pointed out by one of my hon. Friends, unreality. The right hon. Gentleman clearly thought that he could play both sides against the middle. He thought he was on to a very good thing. He thought he could play a statesmanlike role, rushing round the City making play of his own conversion to the joys of sound finance, while at the same time, his colleagues were covering the length and breadth of the land making promises to lobbies and pressure groups, and committing themselves to more and more additional spending, to please the Left wing behind him.

But, to the right hon. Gentleman's evident chagrin, we were observing the process and noting down each and every promise as it appeared, until the total cost—as the House and the country now know—came to £24 billion. The right hon. Gentleman ought to be grateful to us for blowing the whistle at that figure. If we had not, who knows where the Labour party might have ended up. Since we announced it, the right hon. Gentleman has tried every way he knows to wriggle off the hook; and failed.

So far, on the basis of our exchanges and the right hon. Gentleman's assurances, I have agreed to make two changes. They put one figure down and another figure up, leaving the total pretty much the same. For weeks the alarm bells have been ringing in top Labour circles. Last Sunday's press quotes " a senior Kinnock aide" as saying that the Labour party has

"got to get out of the habit of ringing up the promises on the cash register".

So we come to today's figure. I shall leave aside such things as pensions, although I assure the right hon. Gentleman that if he financed his programme as he intends, he would do devastating damage to much of the economy. I shall tot the figures up later but I reckon that the total would approach £10 billion. Perhaps he will tell me if I am too high.

Mr. Hattersley: On the programme I have described, the right hon. Gentleman is wrong by 50 per cent. I want to ask him about the previous figures. In regard to the £24 billion he will recall that on television last night and again this morning I called him something which the rules of order prevent me from calling him in the House. He will also recall that, when he told the House of the figures, he

said that they had been compiled by the Civil Service. I have today received a letter from the secretary to the Cabinet. I shall quote two sentences:

"I understand that Treasury officials were asked by Treasury Ministers to provide them with estimates of the costs of implementing proposals which Ministers, with the assistance of their political advisers, had identified as having been put forward in Labour Party documents or by Labour Party spokesmen. The list of proposals to be costed was not compiled by officials."

Whom does the right hon. Gentleman think will be fooled by that?

Mr. MacGregor: We never argued that it was compiled by Treasury officials. We followed the normal practice of the past in asking them to do what they did. I sent to the right hon. Gentleman the list on which the figure was based. It was a list compiled by him and his colleagues from pledges which they had made. I have given the right hon. Gentleman many opportunities to deny them and so far he has denied only a tiny amount. I have admitted that we got one wrong; it should have been higher. I have told him constantly in the House, not least last Thursday, that he would have to bring his commitments down. It has only been our constant promptings, I suspect, that have caused him to do so. Today we are getting a response.

I do not think the right hon. Gentleman will be able to finance the other parts for which he thought the finance would come from the self-financing of capital taxes and higher rates of tax. For this year, we seem to be on £5 billion to £6 billion. I make only two comments. First, we and the country will watch constantly to see that the right hon. Gentleman really has control of his colleagues. We will want assurances that all the other programmes in the list of commitments which I sent him have been dropped. We shall be watching like hawks to see that they do not start ringing up the promises on the cash register again. I shall be interested to hear what his right hon. and hon. Friends on the Back Benches think about the pledges which, on what he has said today, he does not now intend to carry through. *[Interruption.]* If that is his strategy for the Budget, the fear remains for the country that that figure of £24 billion is what the Opposition are committed to. We now have it on record that the right hon. Gentleman's lower figure applies to this Budget, but we still want to see what in the £24 billion programme the right hon. Gentleman wants to knock out.

Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman's figure for this Budget is still far too high. It appeared that the right hon. Gentleman wanted to finance much of the Budget on the borrowing requirement. He said that borrowing is an option. He and his Government tried it, and look what happened. During that period we saw a rise in interest rates, devastation to the economy and higher inflation rates.

If the right hon. Gentleman intends to finance the extra expenditure today entirely on the borrowing requirement, that would have made impossible today's fall in interest rates. His figures would have pushed them much higher. Up would go mortage rates, squeezing the income of millions of families. Up would go inflation, harming the poor and the pensioners, about whom he talked, destroying existing jobs and new employment opportunities. Was it not the right hon. Gentleman who told the House last month how important it was to cut interest rates in order to bring down unemployment?

The right hon. Gentleman told the House recently that the Labour party would no increase the basic rates of income tax. I have explained to the House the benefits to jobs, enterprise and families of the penny off — the reduction to 29p that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has now announced. Will he and his party now oppose that? I take it that the right hon. Gentleman will support it.

Mr. Hattersley *indicated assent.*

Mr. MacGregor: That is useful to know. It means that the right hon. Gentleman must find another £1 billion on the borrowing requirement. The only conclusion that I can reach is that he would never be able to do so. He would have to turn once again to raising substantive VAT and petrol taxes, again with harmful effects on inflation, the poor and pensioners.

The right hon. Gentleman has not got out of his dilemma or off the hook at all. His programme is still unfinancable without devastating effects. The contrast is that, by prudent finance and sound public expenditure policies, my right hon. Friend was able to announce a Budget yesterday which will be good for enterprise and jobs tomorrow.

5.21 pm

Mr. Roy Jenkins (Glasgow, Hillhead): I hardly wish to intrude in the private quarrel between the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). There is a sharp contrast between the oratorical style of the Chief Secretary and his predecessor the right hon. and learned Member for Dover (Mr. Rees), who has just left us. It is rather like having a machine gun battalion replacing a stately and elegant squadron of cavalry. I am not sure that the quick burst of tactical fire from the right hon. Gentleman, while in many ways very effective, enables him to stand back and look at the strategic landscape.

Let me look at the Chancellor's last three Budgets. I see that the Chancellor, who was the first Chancellor for 20 years or more to be late for the speech from the Opposition Front Bench, has now left us. I was about to pay him a few tributes, but he really is a remarkably bad listener. His first Budget was, in my view, remarkably well presented. It was taut, logical and lucid, the best for quite a long time —about 14 years, I would be inclined to say. It did not in my view engage wholly with the central problem, but it made some sensible changes around the edges.

The second Budget was less good. I think that the right hon. Gentleman had been rather thrown by the mismanagement of the sterling crisis in January of last year, and the bombast was a little more to the fore when he proclaimed that it was a Budget for jobs, which it manifestly was not, whatever else it was.

How does this year's Budget fit into the pattern? First, the right hon. Gentleman has had the advantage of being able to prepare things under the shadow of the Westland affair, while the attention of his colleagues was almost totally occupied elsewhere. Secondly, he seems to have learnt the lesson that if one wants to make a Budget speech interesting, it is rather a good idea not to put most of it in *The Sunday Times* two days before.

The Chancellor started with a brisk canter of contents, announcing exactly what he was going to say, and what subjects he was going to cover. I thought that the Budget

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was going to be as clearly delineated as his first Budget, but it did not entirely hold up in that respect. The pudding had some good plums in it, but in my view it did not have a theme. Nothing very logically or obviously followed from anything else, and several vital issues were glossed over. Poor old sterling M3, after its days of glory in the early 1980s, really was pushed firmly into the wastepaper basket. It can go away and grow if it must by 11 to 15 per cent., but do not trouble us again. That was the dismissive message it received.

The exchange rate also had some fairly cursory treatment. We heard a number of tributes from the Chancellor to the Plaza accord, but I missed the vital factor, particularly for next year, of the Chancellor's description of his exchange rate policies. The Plaza accord means that benign neglect is out of the window, was wrong, has been abandoned and will not be reverted to. But it does not amount to an exchange rate policy for Britain, which British business men would greatly like to see.

On Saturday the *Financial Times* leader said that British business men would

"welcome a stable exchange rate, help for the unemployed, and lower interest rates, in roughly that order, with tax cuts far behind."

Judged by that test, this is not much of a Budget for business. How long will the Chancellor and the Foreign Secretary allow the Prime Minister to continue with her prejudice against joining the European monetary system, for which conditions are now almost ideal, and against which there is now hardly any rational case left?

However, it would be quite idle to deny that this is an ingenious Budget, with some good things in it. The provisions for charities are right, the paving of the way —although there is some way to go—to profit-sharing is right, the excise duties have been handled skilfully, and on the whole wisely, with just as much skill devoted to their presentation as to their formulation, and that is well done.

I have substantially more doubts about the destruction of capital transfer tax. This tax undoubtedly raised genuine and difficult problems, and it was not a perfect tax, but to go back to death duties, unsupported by any tax on gifts inter vivos, is pretty unsatisfactory, too. Death duties are an extremely haphazard and weak tax. If people die old, it is, broadly speaking, a voluntary levy paid by those who distrust their heirs more than they dislike the Inland Revenue. Therefore, it effectively becomes a levy on the rich who die young and unexpectedly, which is not a satisfactory fiscal basis. It is also a weak tax because of the arrangements, in themselves desirable, between spouses, which means that families have two chances to avoid it.

I am no believer in punitive taxation, but the forces making for inequality in Britain today are so strong that I am surprised that it should be within the philosophy, even of this Government, substantially to add to them in respect of inherited wealth. It cannot make sense for this tax, which is essentially one of long-term effects on the nation and long-term dispositions to the individual, to be such a political football, to be so frequently kicked back and forth and up and down the pitch. This is pre-eminently a tax for which we should try to get some permanent arrangement agreed between the parties, within the walls of which individuals can do some sensible planning.

There is another distributive point. In the argument over the turn of the year about the relation between direct taxation concessions, which it was thought would be much bigger, and a stimulus to the economy by an increased level of investment in the public sector, the Prime Minister, supported by the chairman of the Conservative party, was much concerned, as usual, to try to capture the populist ground and talked about people on lower pay who are paying too much tax. I remember her saying that nurses, in particular, were paying far too much tax. I am not sure that the Chancellor can have heard, because the low-paid will be lucky if they get a reduction of 0·2 per cent. out of the Budget. Those on between £15,000 and £20,000 a year will have a percentage benefit approaching 1 per cent., and therefore a significant level. It reaches its maximum in money terms even higher up, but to some extent that is inevitable with all direct taxation changes.

There can be no doubt that this is a remarkably stony-hearted Budget for those who are the casualties of the Government's policies. The Budget further divides an already dangerously divided realm. That is the major, but not the central, criticism of the Budget. The central criticism is that it is a complacent Budget. It is a modest Budget, and in this one respect it is the Budget of a Minister of taxation who accepts the economic weather, rather than that of a Chancellor of the Exchequer who tends, to some extent, to make the economic weather. Whether that approach is right depends essentially on two issues. First, is the present weather in the sense of the condition and prospect of Britain acceptable; and, secondly, if it is not, can a Chancellor do anything significant about it?

The Chancellor answered firmly yes to the first question about whether the weather is acceptable both now and in the future. That is the cause of his complacency. To paraphrase what he said, our growth is the highest in Europe, the fall in the rate of inflation is a triumph, the loss of half our oil revenues has been surmounted with hardly a tremor, and the prospect ahead is almost blissful. I became just a little frightened when I heard that.

On the individual points, there is, as the Chancellor and the House will know, a possibility—there always is—of putting different glosses on particular statistics. For instance, how good the growth rate is depends essentially upon the starting point. If we compare growh today to 1981, it is not too bad. However, if we take 1979, a date not without significance—only the starting point of the Government — our growth now is 1·1 per cent. per annum, which compares with 2·5 per cent. per annum in the preceding and now much-derided decade and a half from 1964 to 1979.

Inflation is certainly down, but it is not strikingly so by international standards. The record is at best indifferent, and at worst almost bad. German inflation is now probably below 1 per cent., and the French inflation rate is well below ours. I much enjoy recalling how the Prime Minister used to excoriate the French Government and their economic defence. We do not hear a great deal about that now. When the French Government came to power, for the first 18 months after 1981 they endeavoured to pursue a Socialist policy, and the result was a pretty good disaster. They then turned to a Social Democratic policy, and the result has been a level of unemployment barely two thirds

of ours and a level of inflation barely half of ours. There is no question but that both the Prime Minister and the leader of the Opposition might well put this in their pipes and smoke it.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): The right hon. Gentleman has denigrated the Government's achievements on growth and inflation. He spoke about the higher growth rate in the 15 years preceding 1979, which was an era of high growth. Since 1979, and particularly since 1981, we have been in an era of low growth. The right hon. Gentleman compared our economy to that of the Germans. The achievement of this Government is to have reduced inflation from 27 per cent. to near 3·5 per cent.

Mr. Jenkins: The Government brought that about.

Mr. Browne: They did that because they had to absorb the shock that they inherited. The German achievement is to bring inflation down from a much lower point.

Mr. Jenkins: If the hon. Gentleman is to make rather over-long factual interjections, he should at least get his facts right, and he is not right on either point. He said that the recent period had been one of a low growth rate world-wide. The growth in the United States in 1983-84 was one of the most exceptional in a major economy of the world which can——

Mr. Browne: That was the exception.

Mr. Jenkins: As the economy of the United States happens to be about half that of the free world, it is not a minor exception. I hold no brief for the previous Administration, not at the end, at any rate. The right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) will speak for that, if necessary. My recollection is that when he left office, inflation, perhaps temporarily, was only 10 per cent., not 27 per cent. We must have accuracy in factual interventions.

Sir Peter Hordern *rose*——

Mr. Jenkins: I do not have time to give way. Had the hon. Gentleman kept the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) a little shorter, I might have been able to give way.

We then have the Chancellor glorying in the fact that we have lost half our oil revenue in less than 25 weeks and we are still well on our feet. The sterling-dollar rate has stood up better than I would have expected [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] Conservative Members should not get into the state of mind in which they think that every statement is so notable. I know that we are engaged in adversarial politics, but it is too tedious if that has to be seen in terms of one of these weather things, where the man comes out and the woman goes in. It is a rather two-dimensional and childish view. The sterling-dollar rate has, for the time being, stood up better than I would have expected.

The Chancellor reminds me of someone who falls off, or throws himself off, the 50th floor and as he passes the 25th floor says, "All right so far." It must be said that there is still some distance to go and the effects are liable to be delayed, because hitting the ground is still to come.

A thesis which is often forwarded by Conservative Members is that the capacity of an economy to adjust should not be under-estimated. Total catastrophe for national economies very rarely happens. Equally, the capacity to adjust should not be exaggerated. There is no method by which Britain can accommodate the disappearance of the oil surplus and the likely projections of our manufacturing balance of trade. Unmasked by oil, it would give us a deficit which there was no chance of covering by invisibles and services. One could cover it for a time by borrowing, particularly as we have had a fairly strong balance of payments recently, but not indefinitely. If one has to correct by deflation the effect on unemployment, starting from its present level, would be devastating and would take us to undreamt-of totals. Therefore, it appears to me that set alongside the Chancellor's self-congratulation there must be a range of considerations.

First, the oil surplus is going quite rapidly, although perhaps not the oil production. As the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said, there is a considerable difference between a loss of revenue through falling price, which brings other benefits to the economy and to other economies, and a loss of revenue because the oil has run out, which does not bring any corresponding benefits.

We have not done much with the oil during that period. We have built up some overseas assets, for which there is something to be said. I am not against that by any means. [HON. MEMBERS: "Something?"] Yes, something, but certainly not everything. I do not believe that anybody sensibly believes that pouring money overseas and neglecting our investments at home solves everything. A certain balance must be struck.

During the Government's period of office the oil revenues to the Government have been £51 billion, and the unemployment costs during the same period have been £33 billion. That is a substantial proportion to have gone in that direction.

Secondly, manufacturing industry is in no position to close the gap. Investment in manufacturing industry is still well below the 1979 level.

Thirdly, unemployment is untouched, at significantly above 3 million. I started to believe last autumn, as the Government certainly suggested, that we were at least on a plateau and that there might be a slight fall. That did not happen. On the contrary, there was a vicious little up kick at the turn of the year. It is certain that it is now impossible seriously to sustain the view that a reduction in inflation will in itself bring about a reduction in unemployment. Inflation is certainly a scourge, and can also be the enemy of employment, but it is a logical fallacy to say that, because that is so, if inflation is brought down it will spontaneously generate employment. That does not happen without other sensible economic policies.

Fourthly, there is a serious rundown of general public maintenance of housing stock and a whole range of other matters of that sort. This rundown strikes most people coming here from outside the United Kingdom, and is strongly supported statistically. However, to an extent which I do not believe is fully appreciated yet — certainly not on the Labour Benches; I am not sure about the Conservative Benches, and perhaps not on our Benches — a major long-term public expenditure difficulty is looming. We have managed to get through with the vast costs involved in massive unemployment only because of the oil revenue. At the same time, there is no doubt that, whatever statistics are produced saying that more money is spent on the Health Service or education, there are serious strains on those services. Therefore, one has a conjuncture of issues which produce

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a different public expenditure forecast, whoever is trying to deal with it. The pressure on resources with unemployment and without oil is formidable, and the blissful prospect ahead seems to be highly dangerous.

What can and should the Chancellor do about it? There is fairly wide agreement nearly everywhere, except on the Treasury Bench and on some parts of the Government Back Benches. The Confederation of British Industry, nearly every Tory Minister, as soon as he ceases to be a Minister—with the exception of the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), whom I acquit of that for the moment—the all-party Charter for Jobs, the House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade, the House of Commons Select Committee on Employment and the statement by the alliance, which is the clearest, most succinct and carefully costed of all, move broadly in the same direction. They may conceivably all be wrong, but it seems a little presumptuous of the Treasury Bench to be so certain of that. I wish that I was as certain of anything as the Chancellor is of everything.

As I said, the right hon. Gentleman is an ingenious Chancellor who presents his Budgets, particularly this one and his first Budget, skilfully, but there is a grave danger that he will have presided over almost the last opportunity to turn round the manufacturing decline of this country before it is too late.

5.46 pm

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): The unusual feature of this year's Budget is that it is remarkably difficult to find anyone who is significantly worse off. Indeed, if one takes the view, as I do, that there is a positively beneficial effect if those who smoke smoke less and have an incentive to smoke less, it is true to say that the only groups who have really been penalised are foreign artists and sportsmen who happen to be working here. If one looks at the Budget in the context of what I might presume to call Higgins' first law of Budgets—that those who have taxes increased scream louder than those who cheer tax deductions—I think that there is a strong argument for saying that this should be a popular Budget.

The Chancellor has had meagre resources this year and he has been heavily curtailed by the fall in oil revenues. As a result he has resorted to a variety of ingenious solutions to particular problems. Indeed, I think that it is true to say that ingenuity is the hallmark of this Budget, and it is reflected in almost every proposal that it contains.

I should like to begin by expressing appreciation of three particular items in the Budget. First, this is undoubtedly the best Budget ever for charities. It has not been an easy task. When one becomes involved in that area of policy, it is easy to disrupt those who are benefiting from existing concessions, particularly with regard to covenants. On the whole, that has been avoided. The change in the value added tax relief is important, as is the provision for public companies to make charitable donations and the arrangements for payroll giving. All those issues have considerable significance for my constituents.

Secondly, I welcome the proposal for a personal equity plan. That is a move in the right direction. I am a little worried about the scope of the concessions for tax relief on dealing charges. If we want to move the balance away from institutional arrangements to direct investment in shares, I think that we shall have to look carefully at the arithmetic.

Thirdly, I welcome the indefinite extension of the business expansion scheme. I should like to make one constituency point, to which I do not want an answer this evening, but I hope that I can have an early reply. The restrictions of the business expansion scheme with regard to proposals involving property investment are right in principle, but the Chancellor said that that would be imposed on shares issued from the day of his Budget statement. In my constituency, one business expansion scheme—I gather that there may be others—has started the operation of issuing the shares, but has not completed it. That could be a dangerous aspect of the problem. While it is not of great national significance, perhaps the Minister will look at it.

The changes in income tax are ingenious. I am a little worried that the Chancellor has not fulfilled completely the statutory requirements introduced as a result of the Rooker-Wise-Lawson amendment to the Finance Bill some years ago. None the less, the way in which the balance has been struck between those at the upper and those at the lower end of the scale, by not fully indexing the top end and by giving the 1p reduction in standard rate, has biased it in the right direction. That is to be welcomed. However, I continue to hope that the emphasis will be put on threshold raising rather than on standard rate cutting. We shall need to consider that in the context of the Budget next year.

I should like to refer to broader issues. The strategic success of the Budget must depend on its effect on unemployment. I believe that that is common ground on both sides of the House. If we are to analyse the problem correctly, we must appreciate that reasons for the present unemployment are different from those in any previous period. In 1979-80, the effect of the inflationary Clegg pay awards, which the incoming Conservative Government conceded—indeed, they went beyond them—the effect of the high exchange rate resulting from the high oil price, and the effect of the world recession squeezed company profits to an unprecedented extent. As a result, many companies that previously had not been prepared to make people redundant, because of the heavy costs of redundancy pay imposed by the so-called Employment Protection Act 1975, cut their labour forces by as much as third. They then found that they could produce virtually as much as before. The reality was that many of the jobs were not really there in the first place. There was much overmanning and concealed unemployment.

That once-and-for-all change, which was a terrible human tragedy for many individuals and their families—no one, least of all myself, would wish to deny that—had two results. First, there was the potential for a substantial increase in productivity the moment the economic situation began to improve. That is taking place now, and we need to take that into account. Secondly, the country has been faced with the task of generating an immense number of new real jobs. That is bound to take time. Against the background of that major restructuring, it will not be possible to solve the problem in the short term.

It is right to go for retraining, the youth training scheme, the community programmes, and so on. We have been generating many new jobs, and employment has been increasing, but the demographic trend has been against us. Therefore, the crucial question is: are we setting the right

economic framework within which that huge number of new jobs can be generated as fast as it can reasonably be done without jeopardising that progress, so that we get a continual improvement rather than just a sudden improvement? The economic forecast in the Red Book shows that our growth rate is about 3 per cent. and, as the Chancellor said yesterday, we have been achieving that for some time. I have not heard from the Opposition any suggestion as to how much faster the growth rate should be. By historic standards, 3 per cent. is a high rate of economic growth, certainly when sustained for several years.

Therefore, my feeling about the level of demand in the economy is that, give or take half a per cent. here or there we are probably going as fast as we safely can, but we are doing so against the background of lower inflation. As the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said, that is still not very good compared with some of our competitors. That remains a real problem, but it is certainly a great deal better than when the Conservative party came to office.

The overall combination of a reducing exchange rate and a safe but, by historic standards, fast rate of economic growth, gives us the best prospect for maintaining the upward trend in employment. As the demographic factors change, there should be a gradually improving trend in unemployment. However, longer-term improvement must also depend crucially on the level of investment. That is the main point that I want to make. It is a matter not only of profitability, as my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary said, but of profitability in relation to interest charges or the cost of capital. My right hon. Friend mentioned the figure for profitability of 8 per cent. That has to be looked at against the cost of capital. It is therefore very important that we should reduce the real level of interest rates. That being so, we must face the fact that they are being maintained at the present high levels for either domestic or international reasons.

It is right that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor should seek to reduce the level of public sector borrowing because, the amount that has to be funded is less, and it can be done with lower interest rates while still avoiding an excessive increase in the money supply. I leave on one side the controversy in which the Select Committee on Treasury and the Civil Service has been engaged with the Chancellor—which, from time to time, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook seems to understand — as to whether the proceeds of privatisation represent a means of funding the public sector borrowing requirement, revenue or a reduction in public expenditure. I do not want to go over that matter today. The crucial point is that if, for domestic reasons, we can restrain the level of borrowing, there is no reason for interest rates to be as high as they have been. That is reflected in the reaction of the City today in the light of the Budget itself. We could have had lower interest rates for domestic reasons, but they have been kept high for international reasons.

I was intrigued by the passage in the Chancellor's speech, when he said:

> "Short-term interest rates are the essential instrument of monetary policy. Changes in interest rates have a reasonably quick and direct effect on narrow money, as they do on the exchange rate."—[*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 170.]

We do not have a monetarist policy now. In fact, it is not that monetarism is dead; it has never been born under this Government. At present we have an interest rate-exchange rate policy. Therefore, it is important that we get the interest rate down from an international point of view. That being so, it is extremely important that we should do everything possible to encourage the Americans to reduce their budget deficit, which is keeping up American interest rates, which, in turn, have been keeping ours up. We need to ensure that we have a sensible exchange rate.

The answer that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook gave to a question about the appropriate exchange rate was extraordinary. He said that it was that which maximised sales or turnover. If companies want to maximise turnover, there is no problem. They just cut their prices to ribbons. I say, if one is to say anything at all, that profits should be maximised, although I should be hesitant to make any such statement. The right hon. Gentleman's answer was not sensible.

Interest rates are higher than they need be because of the need to maintain the differential to prevent the exchange rate from collapsing. However, we must look at different exchange rates. It is not exactly true, but it is often said, that we buy in dollars and sell in deutschmarks. In the past six months there has been an extraordinary change in exchange rate relativities. They are more favourable for us now because sterling has depreciated significantly in relation to the deutschmark and, on the whole, its relationship with the dollar has improved. However, we must consider that in the context of the Group of Five discussions. That being so, it is now appropriate to consider the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

There are many conflicting arguments about that, and they are set out clearly in the Treasury Select Committee report which was published a few months ago. If one were uncertain whether to join and dithering on the margins, it would be difficult not to think that this moment is a much better opportunity than previous moments. I do not agree with the Prime Minister when she said at Question Time a couple of weeks ago that if we had joined earlier when we were being asked to join, we would have greatly regretted it. The implication was that it would be wrong to consider the matter afresh now. I still believe that we should consider it at this stage because, although it may not be worth buying something at a high price, that does not logically mean that one should not consider buying the same product at a lower price.

We need to analyse the matter carefully against the background of the change in the French Government. If the sterling exchange rate gave a greater impression of stability, it is possible that much of the money which is at present in Germany would, after the Budget, come to the United Kingdom. If that is so, the potential for cutting interest rates could be as much as 1·5 or 2 per cent.—a prize greatly to be welcomed. Against that background, and taking into account all the conflicting arguments which the Select Committee set out, we should consider the position in relation to the differential exchange rates which exist at present.

Overall, this is a remarkably ingenious Budget. It will be widely welcomed throughout the United Kingdom, and certainly by my constituents.

6.2 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): The right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), for whom many of us have great respect partly because he is not

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afraid to rock the boat when he thinks that his party is on the wrong tack, has come down on the other side today. I agree with him that the Budget is ingenious, but not for the reasons that he has adduced.

The right hon. Gentleman said that he would judge the Budget by its effect on unemployment, and I shall refer to that shortly. The Budget was ingenious and wise in the sense that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was careful not to claim that it was a Budget for jobs. That is one claim that cannot be made for it, and at least the Chancellor seems to have learnt that painful lesson from previous Budgets when he has made that claim and been disproved each time.

Yesterday the Chancellor put on a slick performance, but he did little to allay the anxieties of most people, including a large number of Conservatives inside and outside the House, about the long-term prosperity of the United Kingdom. In that respect his performance was on a par with that of the Prime Minister when she spoke to her party disciples last Saturday. She used that occasion as an excuse for not attending the funeral of the assassinated Prime Minister of Sweden. Mr. Olof Palme was one of the finest international statesmen of our time. He was a ceaseless peace campaigner and a never-tiring worker for the underdeveloped Third world, yet our Prime Minister had no time for him or his principles. Her absence from his funeral was a contemptible dereliction of duty and a sad commentary on her sense of priorities and decency.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not see what the Prime Minister's attendance at a funeral has to do with the debate, especially as she has committed herself to attending the memorial service.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): This is a wide debate.

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman had better learn the first lessons of behaviour in the House before he seeks to intervene in that stupid way.

I wish to relate the Prime Minister's speech on Saturday to the speech of the Chancellor yesterday. The Prime Minister's speech was as raucous and deceptive as the Chancellor's was smooth, smug and complacent. After listing the post-1979 alleged successes, the Prime Minister said that we were only just beginning and that we had barely got past the stage of excavation. Some of us would put it another way. The hole that we are digging for the British economy is only half dug, so we must go on digging. That seems to offend the first principle of holes which was first annunciated by my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) who said, "When you are in a hole, the first principle is to stop digging." But the Prime Minister says that we must continue to dig because we have only dug half the hole.

Both the Prime Minister and the Chancellor sought and seek to create the impression that all is going to plan, so we must all continue to take the same medicine that has been forced down our throats for the past seven years. That medicine and their policies have led to the decimation of our manufacturing industrial base. Despite the Government's claims, manufacturing output is still less than it was when they first started out on this course in 1979. Despite the Prime Minister's boast about the level of investment, and indeed the boast of the Financial Secretary on television last night, manufacturing investment today is still about 20 per cent. less than it was when they took office in 1979.

The massive bonanza of North sea revenues has been squandered on the financing of ever-lengthening dole queues when it should have been invested in modernising our industry and infrastructure, notably housing, education, health and communications, as the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) and others have continually said. When the House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade published its authoritative report eight months ago and made a devastating analysis of the parlous plight of the British economy, the Government ridiculed it. Yesterday the Chancellor rubbished it.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) referred to the report this afternoon. The Chancellor said:

> "If we can survive unscathed the loss of half our North sea oil revenues in less than 25 weeks, the prospective loss of the other half over the remainder of the next 25 years should not cause us undue concern."—[*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 168.]

That was breathtaking complacency. The right hon. Member for Hillhead said that it is the equivalent of a fellow hurling himself from the 50th floor of a multi-storey block and saying at the 25th floor, "So far I am all right." It is just about as logical as that.

This same Chancellor, referring to the Select Committee's report, said some time ago that the challenge to this country is to foster and nurture a low-tech or no-tech economy and that the future of this country lies in an increase not so much in manufacturing industry as in service industries. He said that we should make this country into a nation of cooks, shop assistants, bottle washers, Chinese laundries and waiters. That would be a low-wage, low-tech and suitably subservient labour force.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury referred to the increase in the standard of living and to the high earnings of British people. I do not know whether he approves of increased earnings or whether he sides with the Chancellor, who said yesterday that we have got to get wages down. I know what his answer will be. He is in favour of increased earnings if they are matched by increased productivity. I should be very glad if the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Government were to apply that policy to the City slickers and their very high earnings. The Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister are aware that they are on a very sticky wicket when they seek to lecture my workers, my nurses, my teachers—the teachers in Scotland and England—and also professors and lecturers about the need for restraint. The Government are letting City slickers who are not yet 30 years of age get away with earnings of £275,000. A few months ago the Government also granted high awards to those on top salaries—judges, admirals and generals—without the flicker of an eyelid and without a moment's hesitation.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Should we not wonder at the very carefully planned propaganda campaign of the last two months in which the Prime Minister and, repeatedly, other Ministers made statements about what they intended to do before the big bang because of their great concern about what is happening in the City? They led people to

believe that something would be done about those high salaries. The public may believe that something has been done, but in fact, nothing has been done.

Mr. Hamilton: Before the Budget, one forecast was that something would be done about City tycoons who are enjoying unearned incomes and that something would also be done about the managing directors and top executives of private companies and about the enormous unearned profits that have been made by the banks during the last few months. Nothing has been done about them, although, as I have already said, the forecast before yesterday's Budget was that something would be done.

Far from facing up to these problems and the future challenges, the Chancellor sought yesterday to create the feeling that I suppose the drug addict experiences when he gets his jab: the feeling of heavenly bliss that lasts for as long as he gets his jabs. Yesterday the Chancellor sought to persuade the British people that everything has been so magnificently planned during the last seven years that we must keep on with this policy. To prove it he gave out a few dribs and drabs, some of which are welcome, although others are less welcome. We shall deal with them during the proceedings on the Finance Bill and in other ways. Many of the proposals are to be welcomed, but I do not intend to enumerate them.

The right hon. Member for Worthing said that few people would be worse off after this Budget, but there are many millions of people who will not be much better off, either. There will not be much rejoicing about the Budget among the old folk, the unemployed and many other struggling sections of the community.

When referring to her concern about the high level of taxation, the Prime Minister has often quoted the nurse on £140 a week. Who put her on that figure and who has kept her on that figure? The nurse pays at least a third of her salary in tax, which we all deplore. She will not get all that much help from the Budget. If she is paying prescription charges or if she smokes cigarettes, she will get nothing at all out of the Budget. Furthermore, she might be evicted from her hostel accommodation. She will then have to seek accommodation for which she will have to pay an economic rent. If that happens in London or in other big cities, she will be very much worse off because of the measures that the Government have introduced.

Although Conservative Members approve of the Budget, I noticed yesterday that at least the first two Conservative Members expressed in their speeches the gravest reservations about the lack of a strategic plan, despite short-term ameliorations and the pretence that all will be well if we stay on this course. Many reservations are being expressed by people about the direction in which we are going. The Chancellor has included very little in his Budget that will help to solve the problem of mass unemployment that plagues us and the divisions in our society between rich and poor and north and south. There are massive social, economic, geographic and class divisions. They have been exacerbated during the last few years. The Budget will do little to solve them.

The rich have undeniably got richer during the last few years. Very telling figures have been given during this debate and they will continue to be given up and down the country during the next 12 months. The rich have undeniably got richer during the last six or seven years while the poor have undeniably got poorer not only in terms of cash receipts but also in terms of services provided, not least those of health and education.

In that context, I wish to refer to an article that appeared in this morning's edition of *The Guardian*. It is a devastating exposure of the cuts that are being made in a teaching hospital. Professor Sam Shuster is professor of dermatology at the university of Newcastle upon Tyne and he has written an article about what is happening to services which form a substantial part of the quality of life of the people whom all hon. Members represent. He said:

"At the same time as the NHS is run down, private medicine is being encouraged. Industry contributes increasingly to private schemes. Since the government persistently and dishonestly denies its attack on the NHS and has effectively prevented those administering it from speaking up, the most important contribution by doctors would be to put this on the public agenda for debate. The public must know that the NHS is being dismantled."

We all see evidence of that in our constituencies. Whatever figures are quoted by the Government, the fact is that the NHS is being taken apart. That is not denied by most knowledgeable people in the Health Service, whether doctors, nurses or patients.

The article continues:

"The public must know that the NHS is being dismantled, and will want to express an opinion on how the limited resources of our society should be used. It seems to many of us that politicians can no longer be trusted to guard the needs of society: they seem unable to face, let alone resolve, the paradox of an expanding military expenditure with less spending on social services, health and education."

In the next paragraph there is a reference to

"the progressive deterioration of the NHS".

That is not an isolated opinion.

In education there is a similar grisly story of neglect and under-funding. This is producing rumbling and seething discontent at all levels among parents, teachers, students, university professors and others. I shall quote from an article written by Sir Kenneth Alexander that appeared in the Scottish *Sunday Mail* on 16 February. Sir Kenneth, who is the principal and vice-chancellor of Stirling university, wrote:

"top talent from Scottish universities is continuously draining away. And goes virtually un-noticed.

Within two years four professors have left Stirling. Two went to the USA and two to Australia, and it was a severe loss to a small university.

The process mostly affects science and technology, but talent is also drained from the arts, languages and culture.

The professors we lost overseas were in biological science, accountancy and business law, maths and philosophy.

Most professors going to the USA will enjoy at least a 50 per cent. increase in real income — with many doubling their salaries."

Sir Kenneth then addressed himself to Strathclyde university and wrote:

"Strathclyde lists five departures to the USA and three to Norway in the last two years. Edinburgh reports that a major project, given special support as being of international standing, is being substantially hindered because two key personnel have gone to the USA.

The Glasgow School of Art is losing its brilliant director to Chicago.

In addition to the overseas brain drain, losses to industry in the UK are reported by all universities.

A technological university in England recently held ten professorships vacant — a deliberate decision by the vice-chancellor, who couldn't get good enough candidates."

Sir Kenneth concluded — *[Interruption.]* It is interesting that Conservative Members do not want to hear an exposé of what is happening in Britain. When listening to the Chancellor of the Exchequer yesterday, no one

[Mr. Hamilton]

would have thought that the problems which I have recited are exercising the minds of many responsible people in all political parties.

Sir Kenneth concluded:

"When too high a proportion of a nation's intellectual seed-corn goes abroad, there is trouble ahead."

That is happening at a time when the Government have the benefit of North sea oil revenues. How much worse will the problem become as the revenues rapidly cease to exist? It is a frightening proposition. In the context of the long-term well-being of the United Kingdom, the Budget must be seen as little more than short-sighted and mean-minded. The one thought uppermost in the mind of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and that of the Prime Minister was all too obvious. They were intent on winning votes at the next general election, and damn the consequences.

6.25 pm

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): I shall not take up the comments of the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) except on a few matters as I proceed with my speech. First, I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the simple way in which he has laid out his Budget. His statement was easy to understand and I have never known a more comprehensive and clear exposé than that which my right hon. Friend gave yesterday of Britain's financial position.

I pay tribute to the Government's sound monetary policy and their control of inflation, which is probably one of the most important factors in the economy. Inflation is now running at 5 per cent. and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer estimates that it might fall to 3·5 per cent. next year. The record of the previous Labour Government on inflaton and the control of it bears no comparison with what we have been able to achieve. When the previous Labour Government were in office, inflation was something over 20 per cent. Over the years, it increased to 27 per cent. or 24 per cent. The Government's control of inflation is a remarkable achievement.

At the same time, growth is running at 3·5 per cent., and it is estimated that it will increase to 5 per cent. next year. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) said, our old industries, which were overmanned, are beginning to fade away. They are being replaced by new industries with fewer employees, and this is producing an extremely worrying situation. I welcome the schemes which have been introduced to assist young people, which are ingenious and well thought out.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central and the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) addressed themselves to unemployment. I listened especially carefully to the remarks of the right hon. Gentleman. As always, his remedy for unemployment was to borrow, borrow and borrow again. I found it difficult to estimate what it would cost in money terms to implement the programmes which he suggested. He spelt out the cost of the various programmes bit by bit but he did not present the House with the overall cost. I hope that the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) will take up this important matter when she replies.

The Government have created 700,000 jobs, and I acknowledge that that has reduced unemployment by only a fraction. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said that a Labour Government could cure unemployment, but I suggest that that would be done by borrowing, in the same way as the previous Labour Government. I have no doubt that the result would be the IMF moving in as it did then.

The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) was wise when he spoke of the serious strain that unemployment imposes on Britain's resources whichever Government happen to be in power. For once, the right hon. Gentleman was right.

I was surprised by the agreement of the right hon. Member for Hillhead about investment abroad, which now stands at £90 billion. I understand that this investment yields about £6 billion a year. Our overseas investments provide a great source of revenue.

The capital transfer tax concession will help the continuation of small family businesses. We are talking about steady expansion. As the Chancellor said, expansion is determined by many factors, but the principal one is that if the public sector borrowing requirement is controlled and if labour costs are restrained, then there is the opportunity and the right climate for expansion. That applies especially to small businesses to which my right hon. Friend has paid so much attention in the past and to which he has given much of his time.

A property-owning democracy is one of the bulwarks of Tory philosophy. As we know, home ownership has increased, but equally important is wider share ownership in the denationalised industries and the concept of the people having a shareholding and owning a stake in the country. It is of paramount importance that they have a stake in the industry in which they work, and the £2,400 a year tax concession is certainly an incentive towards that goal.

I should like to see shares being owned by more ordinary people. Figures show that a great proportion of shares are owned by great institutions, but I should like to see share ownership apread much wider so that the ordinary man can be a shareholder and a property owner. I am certain that is the meaning of a property-owning democracy.

One of the problems that has for years taxed successive Administrations is how to deal with charities. I have seen numerous early-day motions of one form or another and all of them have touched on the same point—how can we help charities? While the state provides a certain amount of help, it is the voluntary organisations upon which we rely for many services, and to be able to give them more money by the incentives produced by the Chancellor is commendable and will be welcomed on both sides of the House and certainly by all sections of the community.

I am sorry to say that there is one point upon which I do not agree with the Chancellor; that is the penny off the income tax. I would rather see the threshold reduced. I say that for two reasons. My first reason is that it would have a good effect because it is important to narrow the gap between what is earned from work and what an unemployed person receives from the state. Secondly, it would give people an incentive to work. A penny off the top does not make much difference, but reducing the threshold would be far more acceptable because it would reduce the number of taxpayers and tax inspectors and narrow the gap between earnings and social security payments.

Britain has the beginnings of a great expansion. It will be a new expansion and one in which the economy will be strong enough to be able to give more by way of public and social services. There is no point in saying that we should spend more in this or that area, because the money has to come from somewhere and it can only come from proper administration. We cannot get money out of the sky. It has to be earned and the only way of earning it is by increasing our economic capacity and the output of our industries and selling it to other countries. As I said earlier, those industries have to be changed and our whole concept of industry has to be altered. We must recognise that some of the traditional industries will have to go and will need to be replaced. I know that that will create problems but I am afraid that change will have to be accepted. The encouragement the Chancellor has given to the saver and to small businesses is most encouraging.

6.36 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): There are some good and sensible elements in the Budget. They are few, but one of them that I readily acknowledge is the decision to make concessions to charities. That is long overdue — not just from a Conservative Administration—but it is a fine gesture.

I was also pleased to hear about the increase in the tax on cigarettes. I sincerely hope that as a direct result of that increase we will see a sharp diminution in the consumption of cigarettes. Far too many people in Britain often meet a painful and premature end as a result of that form of drug abuse. There is a warning there for some hon. Members. I am certainly not aiming my remarks at you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I was sorry to learn of the refusal to introduce a swingeing increase on the tax on drink, because alcoholic beverages are far too cheap.

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): Killjoy.

Dr. Godman: The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) says that I am a killjoy. I am not a killjoy, nor am I a prohibitionist—not by a long chalk—but if it is correct, as has been suggested in a recent Select Committee report, that the drug of choice for far too many Americans is cocaine, certainly the drug of choice for far too many British people and far too many youngsters is alcohol. It is a major social evil, and I should like to see it costing more.

I want to focus attention not on drink or on tobacco, but on unemployment and poverty. I have a lot of sympathy with this morning's editorial in *The Scotsman*, which says:

"What will not escape criticism is his refusal to make any concessions to those, including many of his Cabinet colleagues, who consider that the Government's priority ought to be tackling unemployment. His measures on the jobs programme front will cost a net £165 million which, in what he describes as the fastest growing economy in Europe, is only the small change. He has changed neither his remedies nor excuses though the case for more public investment is accepted everywhere but in Downing Street. Even the £900 million he has conceded to taxpayers, the brightest of all the pieces of tinsel, would have produced a better return in jobs had it been directed not to people's pockets but to their roads, houses, schools and hospitals."

The Chancellor has given little hope to the millions of British citizens living in poverty. I say that despite his statement that a total of £485 million is to be spent on additional measures to tackle unemployment. The right hon. Gentleman claims that such proposals are aimed at helping young people aged between 18 and 20, and those unemployed people aged over 45. I believe that the total is made up of £195 million in 1986-87 and £290 million in the following year. That money will be taken from the reserve so that there will be no increase in public expenditure planning totals. I give those five main measures—the enterprise allowance scheme, the small firms loan guarantee scheme, the new workers scheme, the community programme, and counselling for the older unemployed—a qualified welcome. Indeed, the latter may be important in helping many dispirited middle-aged unemployed people.

However, the expansion of the community programme should be accompanied by a much better wage than the increase from £63 to £67 per week. My experience of the community programme and of the complaints that some of my constituents have made leads me to say that the Chancellor should urge on his colleagues in the Department of Employment the need to eliminate, wherever possible, the lengthy, cumbersome and bureaucratic procedures and regulations surrounding such programmes and applications for assistance.

The Chancellor's so-called employment measures have met with a sceptical, if not jaundiced, reaction in Scotland. This morning, the chairman of the Scottish CBI, Mr. Ian Little, said:

"The Chancellor has missed the opportunity created by the strengthening UK economy to make a substantial attack on unemployment . . . The figure is likely to stay at the present horrific level for some time to come. He could have taken the opportunity to expand public sector capital investment rather than taking the wrong course on personal taxation. Those at the bottom of the tax ladder caught in the poverty trap are still not going to escape into work."

The truth is that the Budget will do nothing for the 370,000 Scots who are registered as unemployed. The unemployment statistics for my constituency are a scandal. In Greenock and Port Glasgow 9,000 people are unemployed. In the Greenock travel-to-work area, which embraces part of the constituency represented by the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley), the number of unemployed stands at 10,500. I am using February 1986 figures. I can tell the Chancellor that the unemployment rate in that travel-to-work area stands at 21·9 per cent. Moreover, male unemployment is 26·1 per cent.

Unemployment in the Strathclyde region is almost 44 per cent. higher than the figure for Great Britain as a whole. In addition, the figure for the Greenock travel-to-work area is about 60 per cent. higher than the figure for Great Britain. However, I have painted only part of the very dismal picture of poverty in the west of Scotland. In November 1979, there were 157,000 supplementary benefit claimants in Strathclyde. By July 1985, that figure had risen to 305,000 claimants—an increase of 94 per cent. That massive increase is largely the result of the Government's economic policies.

In Scotland as a whole, 531,000 people were claiming supplementary benefit in July 1985. So far I have mentioned only claimants, but if their dependants are included — wives, husbands, and children — the total number relying on supplementary benefit in Strathclyde in July 1985 was 495,000, or 20 per cent. of the population. The figure for Scotland was 867,000, or 16 per cent. of the population.

The figure for Glasgow is much worse. About 39·5 per cent. of the population of that great city exist on, or below,

[Dr. Godman]

the level of supplementary benefit. The Government may have written off Scotland's economy, but it is becoming increasingly clear that Scotland has written off the Tory party. Recent opinion polls show that to be the case, as does the disastrous result for the Tory party in a recent by-election. Indeed, I believe that the Tory candidate finished behind the Communist party candidate.

Mr. Hirst: The Labour party lost the seat.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): I must tell the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) that the Labour party won that seat.

Mr. Hirst: It lost five others though.

Dr. Godman: As always, the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden is rather adrift from reality.

I make no apology for voicing my concern about the problems of unemployment and poverty in Scotland or for focusing my criticisms on the Government's failure to deal effectively with such scandalous issues. Scotland has experienced both decline and growth in industry, neither of which began in May 1979. Once a leader in shipbuilding, marine engineering, steel-making, heavy engineering and manufacturing industry, the country is now seriously adrift in the league of advanced industrial nations. There has been a dreadful decline in employment in all those industries, as well as in textiles, clothing, motor car manufacture, and coal mining.

Taking 1980 as the base year, the index for employment in manufacturing in Scotland was 111·4 in 1977. By June 1985 it had slipped to 76·5. Last year, a Scottish economist, Mr. Bell, said:

"The rate of growth of real incomes in Scotland lags way behind that in the United States of America, France, West Germany and Japan . . . These countries have also, by and large, provided a continuous growth in employment to absorb any increase in labour supply . . . In Scotland, employment opportunities have tended to decline even though labour supply has increased, leaving little option but emigration or unemployment".

Emigration is the traditional Scottish solution to unemployment. In last year's Budget debate, the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) said that if it were not for the 18,000 skilled Scots leaving the country each year, unemployment would be far worse. During a debate in the House last year, I said that North sea oil, the new high technology industries and the service industries, particularly the tourist industry, had saved Scotland from utter humiliation, but that for many Scots the experience was one of poverty amidst much affluence. One year later, the position is precisely the same for many Scots. Last year's Budget was not one for jobs. The same can be said of this one. In the debate on the economy and industry in Scotland, I said:

"Investment in the infrastructure would be one of my policy recommendations. Such investment is desperately needed in my constituency for the replacement or modernisation of a decaying housing stock. Secondly, economic trade and industrial policies should be centred on a precise objective—the development of a manufacturing industry which can compete in all the worlds markets."

I went on to quote Sir Alec Cairncross in a paper that he presented a few months earlier, when he said:

"In the end we cannot escape from the present depression without a large increase in demand and there is no likelihood of such an increase without an initiative on the part of governments. It is pure fantasy to suppose that output will recover of itself." —[*Official Report*, 29 March 1985; Vol. 76, c. 816-17.]

The only reversal of the Government's employment policies that I have come across recently has been the decision by the Secretary of State for Social Services to increase over the next year by more than 5,000 the number of officials employed in local DHSS offices. This is needed to deal with our worsening economic circumstances and the growing number of claimants. That reversal of Government policy, in terms of increasing numbers in that Department, more than anything else shows to my mind the measure of this Government's economic policy.

6.53 pm

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) does not seem to understand that in recent years Scotland has had the second highest GDP in Great Britain, after the south-east and East Anglia. There has been tremendous growth there, which has not been reflected in the north-east and north-west, and if the hon. Gentleman does not understand that, I invite him to visit some of the other regions of our country.

This is a popular Budget, and it has had a good press. It is a people's Budget, and I do not say that in respect of the various alliances and the bits and pieces of good news. Time and again, when weighing up the balance of advantage, one sees that it is a people's Budget, because the Chancellor has favoured individuals rather than institutions. That is as true of the cut in the base rate as it is of the imaginative new schemes for share ownership, capital transfer tax and the relief on giving to charities rather than to the institution receiving it. It is also true of the training measures, where the emphasis is on job clubs, job start, the enterprise scheme, and on the individual trying to get himself into work, rather than on the organisation that might or might not be helping him to do so.

That has to be right, because individuals, after all, are the key to enterprise. It is the individual release of talent and energy, of personal potential, that will create an enterprise culture. It will not be done by politicians, enterprise boards, county councils, development agencies or all the machinery and paraphernalia of the 1960s and 1970s.

Job creation will in the end depend on individuals, and I should like to stress four aspects. First, and most important, there is employment. We can no longer depend in our industrial society on large employers and on job-intensive, internationally mobile investment. Our culture has to rely much less in the employee mentality and much more on the self-starter, the risk taker, the small business man and the new business man. I give a warm welcome to the extension of the enterprise scheme; to the 100,000 places that will be provided by this low-cost, high-value scheme, because 70 to 80 per cent. of those who pass through the scheme are still in business long after the subsidy stops.

I also particularly welcome the extension of the job club and job start scheme nationwide, which restores the link — which I do not think should have been broken, although I understand how Sir Derek Rayner recommended that it should be broken — between the unemployment office and jobcentre. The only way to tackle long-term unemployment is on an individual

personal basis, by calling in the individual who is out of work and offering him practical help and a real measure of support.

In placing the emphasis on that kind of support, the Government recognise that this is part of a much more general change in the nature of employment in our industrial culture, which embraces the growth in part-time working, contract working and the huge increase in self-employment. There is a curious paradox in a society with too high unemployment. As the manager of my local unemployment benefit office put it, "There is plenty of work about, but very few jobs." That distinction is still not properly understood in Whitehall, and the implications for the better and more rapid distribution of jobs into work really needs to be followed through.

Mr. Maxton: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fallon: No, I will not.

There are two ways in which it has to be followed through. We need to boost the self-employed. The self-employed are the enterprise corps at the heart of our economy. There are 2·6 million of them now — up nearly 1 million since the Government came into power. More significant than that, one in three of the self-employed hope to take on another person within two years. That will mean 750,000 new jobs.

We need to help make that happen. I should like to see us cut national insurance contributions for the self-employed further and make self-employment a right for anyone who wants to be self-employed, rather than a privilege accorded, after long deliberation, by officials in the Inland Revenue. I should like to make VAT registration an option—not compulsory—for the self-employed, so that if it is beneficial to them they can register, and if it is not they need not do so.

We need to do something about the black economy. We need to buy it in. The black and grey economies are rampant in my region. They are far larger than the Inland Revenue thinks, especially in areas of high unemployment. I should like to see a radical, imaginative approach by the Treasury, to offer incentives to get people to cross the line from the black and grey economies into the white economy; to bring the Arthur Dalys and Terry McCanns out of the Winchester club into the legit world, so that they can pay in a little revenue in taxation.

Let us have an imaginative proposal to pull those self-employed people, who have these nice little earners after their main job, or those who are out of work and earning a little on the side, into our system. A few months after the Bill becomes law, why not have an amnesty for two or more months, with no retrospection. Let us not look back at anything that has gone before. Let say to them, "Come on down. Cross the line. Pay a little tax and national insurance, and from that point on we will consider you part of the system. There could perhaps be tougher penalties thereafter for non-declaration."

On share ownership, I give a warm welcome to the personal equity plan. I have no hesitation in saying that my right hon. Friend went further than I had dreamt or even hoped as part of his moves to widen share ownership. It has been obvious that simply selling shares in public utilities, important as it is, would not in itself dramatically extend share ownership in the way that we have dramatically extended home ownership.

That has been a huge achievement, but nonetheless there is a striking disparity between what we have achieved in home ownership and what we have yet to achieve in share ownership. I had it costed last year, and it was calculated that the average Briton puts into his home about £654 a year in mortgage payments, repairs or rent, whereas the average commitment of each of us to share ownership of industry and our place of work is £2·20. In other words, each of us in investing 300 times more in his home than in his place of work. I welcome the introduction of the personal equity plan and the measures, on which my right hon. Friend will consult industry, to widen share ownership and to convert us from a nation of small shopkeepers to a nation of small shareholders.

Another side to that policy is the need to ensure that the huge growth in home ownership is not artificially stimulated by too liberal a credit policy. We must ensure that growth in home lending is real and organic, rather than being driven merely by favourable fiscal treatment. In other words, I do not believe that mortgage tax relief at the higher rates can escape my right hon. Friend's review if it is shown that house prices are being driven up and that the real benefit passes through the recipient into the price of the land. That would make initial purchase more difficult, rather than less difficult, for the first-time buyer and would widen the differences between the north and south of our country by making mobility and the movement of the middle and lower management sectors that much more expensive.

I welcome the cut in the base rate, which benefits everyone and, most important, the lower paid. I welcome even more the commitment of cuts to come. I also welcome the reminder of the present Foreign Secretary's original commitment to 25 per cent. income tax, which was made in 1979. It is a commitment which I am sure the Treasury has not forgotten. It will mean our money coming back in our pockets, and that is the best employment policy of all.

In the meantime, on the road to 25 per cent. tax, I can cheer the tax breaks that are being given to pensioners this year. We should not forget that 40 per cent. of all pensioners pay tax, and that they have paid quite enough tax as it is during their working lifetime. I also welcome the tax breaks for donors to charities.

In the longer term, as we pursue the goal of 25 per cent. tax, it will be important to ensure a greater contribution to it from those institutions which at present benefit too favourably from the tax system, such as the pension funds, banks, and some financial services.

In my view, there is no case at all for tax breaks for the City. There is already a danger that the big bang will become an excuse for quite unjustifiably high salaries. The stronger our commitment to a market economy, the more ruthless we must be in tackling fraud—and to be seen to be tackling it—and taxing money which at best can be said to be ill-made.

In that connection, I should like to comment on the business expansion scheme. It will not have escaped the notice of the Treasury that too many of these schemes are essentially candy floss schemes. Some of them have been very important in attracting new venture capital into investment, and I know that a high proportion of that has gone into manufacturing industry, but even after the tightening up about which we heard yesterday, some of these schemes remain candy floss schemes in which the principal beneficiaries are the directors, whose salaries

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and pension prospects are enhanced, or the banks and the funds which have placed these schemes and have earned large commissions as a result.

I suspect that too little of the risk involved is low risk rather than high risk, and that too little of the money is getting out of the south-east into our older industrial areas. I very much hope that the next time my right hon. Friend looks at the business expansion scheme and tightens it up further, after removing the mainly asset-based schemes, he will look at the possibility of establishing job-creating criteria which can be applied to other policies, such as regional industrial assistance.

I am suggesting that fiscal reform is by no means complete. I hope that I can be assured that the programme of fiscal reform will not in future years be restricted by political lobbying and the vested interests which will obviously be upset. I hope that we will restore the goal of fiscal neutrality and continue a medium-term fiscal strategy to complement the medium-term financial strategy. I accept that in that programme the Treasury cannot fight alone. It will need a substantial input from other Departments of State, and it will also require other measures by other Departments to continue to loosen up our labour market.

The truth is that too many people in our industrial culture are trapped on council estates in the province of high-spending councils. They have the low-rented council house, the free bus pass and the regular giro. But they do not have a job, and they do not yet have the chance to move to a job or to price themselves into a job, perhaps in another part of the country.

Given that programme of continuing fiscal and labour market reform, and given my right hon. Friend's promises to continue to tackle national insurance contributions, personal taxation and his moves towards employee share ownership, the verdict on a popular Budget from a people's Chancellor—certainly from those who want to set these people free, particularly in the north of the country, and who want to release the individual talent and energy that is at present wasted on unemployment—remains proxime accessit.

7.9 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): It is always of interest to follow the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), because he is a constituency neighbour. I listened with great interest to his speech. Along with his hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Merchant), he made a number of propositions to the local newspaper that were obviously designed for local consumption before the Budget. He referred to one of them this evening when he spoke of the black economy. The hon. Gentleman will recall as well as I do what the *Northern Echo* thought of those comments.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned a series of fictional television characters whom he believed we ought to copy, but most of those characters are crooks. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman is genuine and sincere in thinking that we should adopt the kind of model to which he referred as the model for the north-east. He also made great play of the black economy in the north-east.

A feeling that afflicts many in the north-east, not only the hon. Member for Darlington, is that somehow the prosperity in that region is based on the black economy and that the people that can buy goods in the shopping centres can do so because they have earned their money in an underhand fashion. I reject totally the suggestion that there is such a black economy in the north-east. I reject totally also the concept that those who fiddle ought somehow to be given an amnesty so that they stop the fiddling. If the hon. Member for Darlington believes that a black economy exists he should ask himself why it exists after something like six years of a Tory Government. He seems to mix his high monetarist principles with a concern for his constituents and for the rest of the people in the north-east. I am prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt about his concern and to say that it is genuine.

The hon. Member talks of low-rent council houses, of those with free bus passes and of giro, but of course he has not had personal experience of having to wait for a giro coming at the end of the week and the dilemma of those who, if for any reason the giro does not arrive on a Friday, have to wait until the Monday without the benefit of a cheque book or a credit card. It is for all these people, many of whom live in my constituency, that we are concerned about this Budget and the fact that it does not address itself to the ordinary people who live in the council estates and in the terraced houses in my constituency and elsewhere.

I do not wish to broaden the debate to all the aspects of the Budget, but I will confine my remarks as much as possible to the impact of the fall in oil prices upon our economy, on which the Chancellor spent some time yesterday. I submit that the Chancellor has made a monumental blunder in his assessment of the impact of the fall in oil prices upon our economy. Over a period of weeks, even months, he maintained a haughty silence on the subject. Yesterday he accepted that the oil price fall has bitten deep into our North sea oil tax revenues and our earnings from exports. In fact, the fall has wiped £6,000 million from the national economy. That is the exact amount of the Contingency Fund. It is also twice the cost of the Falklands war. For every $1 fall in the price of a barrel of oil, a further £500 million is wiped from the revenue, and that is on the assumption that the exchange rate against the dollar stays as it is today.

In his budget statement yesterday the Chancellor made the remarkable claim that the fall in oil prices takes us back in real terms not to 1979, when the price of oil shot up from $12 to $30 a barrel, but to 1973, before the Yom Kippur war and before the recession which the massive increase in the price of oil—at that time from $3 to $12 a barrel—had inaugurated. It also takes us back to a time when Great Britain was still relatively holding its own in the export of manufactured goods and before North sea oil truly came on stream, although the report of the Select Committee on Overseas Trade from another place makes it clear that by 1972, in relation to manufactured exports, the rot had already begun to set in.

The Chancellor yesterday implicitly accepted that for the outside world the pound sterling is a petrocurrency, for in his Budget statement he accepted that he had intervened earlier in the year, in January, with a 1 per cent. increase in the interest rate in order to prevent a free fall in our exchange rate. The fact that this put up our industrial costs and made our industrial goods less competitive apparently hardly crossed his mind. We see again the familiar emphasis on the City and the importance of confidence in

the City, as opposed to the importance of building up our industry and keeping interest rates, and therefore the cost of industry, down.

The Chancellor also admitted yesterday that he had resisted the pressure to raise interest rates still further. He claimed that he did this in order to quell the turmoil in the financial markets caused by the free fall in the price of oil. He has not, however, addressed his mind to what the consequences will be for sterling in the event of the oil price falling still further, and even less to what the attitude of the British Government should be if the price should drift slowly down to $8 a barrel with the onset of the summer and the traditional weak demand for oil.

The true hostage to fortune was the Chancellor's statement:

"there is no question whatever, and never has been any question, of the United Kingdom cutting back its oil production in an attempt to secure a higher price." [*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 168.]

Those words are not — nor could they be — a true statement of fact. At least they lay to rest the shibboleth that the Chancellor of the Exchequer cannot intervene with the oil companies, a pretence that he and the Secretary of State for Energy have kept up for some time, stating that there is a free market in North sea oil and therefore the Government cannot tell the oil companies how much they should be pumping.

Of course, that has not been accepted by any of the oil-producing countries. The Egyptian oil Minister, when he went to the conference of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries this week, echoed the words of the Secretary of State for Energy, saying that the Government could not intervene, but no other OPEC country believes that—certainly not the Government of Saudi Arabia. The British Government can intervene with the oil companies if they wish, and the message from the Chancellor yesterday was that they do not so wish.

Another statement that the Chancellor put out yesterday attributed the success of North sea oil to the fact that it is the freest oil province in the world. He was paying homage there to the statement that the Prime Minister had made before him. But the success of North sea oil has nothing to do with its being a so-called free oil province. It is, in the first instance, a national bonanza, an unexpected energy resource that we have found in the bed of the North sea and in which £36 billion was invested between 1965 and 1985. Because of its national importance, the Labour Government set up the British National Oil Corporation to protect the national interest, although, in order to assist the oil companies, the Labour Government of 1974 agreed not to interfere in oil production for a period of 10 years. Therefore, with the British National Oil Corporation, the oil companies were as free then as they are now to bring the oil out from under the North sea.

Since 1978 we have seen the importance of oil to our national economy. Eighteen new fields have begun production since 1978 and nine fields have been approved for further future production. Oil should begin to flow from two of those fields from 1987 and from five more in 1988. I mention those figures not only to show the importance of North sea oil to our economy but to show again that there can be and there is no such thing as a free market in oil. If it takes seven years to find the oil, to put the platform modules into place and to draw the oil from the North sea, how can we say that there is a free market as regards the price of oil on a day-to-day basis?

The oil industry employs over 60,000 people, 29,000 of whom work on installations on the United Kingdom continental shelf, surface vessels and manned mobile drilling rigs and, of course, in the refinery industry and the module yards. I declare a constituency interest here because we have a series of module yards on Teesside. They recently obtained £85 million-worth of orders from Shell for continuing exploration for oil in the North sea.

However, none of this—this is the point that I want to make—has anything to do with a free North sea oil province. It has everything to do with the nature of the product, the investment over 20 years and the input of the work force. If we were able to get back to a British National Oil Corporation tomorrow, the benefits would be even greater, for we should be able to get some planning into our North sea oil production, the depletion of which must be a matter of national concern, while at the same time avoiding the disasters inherent in the Chancellor's present policy.

The Chancellor's second misstatement was

"we are not only, or even principally, a major oil producer".

In fact, only the United States, the Soviet Union and Saudi Arabia produce more oil than we do. If being the fourth producer in the world does not make us a major oil producer, it is difficult to see what does. The Chancellor compounded that misstatement by declaring:

"we are also a major world producer and trader of many other goods and services—[*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 168.]

The recent report by the House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade showed us just how far we have fallen away as an industrial power. We import more manufactured goods than we export. The report showed how enfeebled we have become in the world of competition.

The Chief Secretary spent much of his speech making unconstructive attacks on the Opposition, the shadow Chancellor and the costing of our proposed Budget. He did not seek to draw attention to the massive deterioration in our surplus in manufactured goods since 1980.

The House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade cited startling figures showing that we have fallen from a surplus in manufactured goods of £5·5 billion in 1980 to a deficit of almost £4 billion in 1984—a deficit equal to 8·25 per cent. of manufactured exports and 1·2 per cent. of GDP. We can see, therefore, how important it was for the Government not only not to refer to that report but even to rubbish it, as the Chancellor did yesterday.

As usual, when one hears the Chancellor's Budget speech—yesterday's speech was the third to which I have listened—it takes a little time to digest it. It takes a little more time when one reads through the speech carefully to find his sleight of hand. Yesterday, he was boldness personified, because he actually dared to quote part of the report by the House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade, when he said:

"as the oil revenues diminish the country will experience adverse effects which will worsen with time".

Yesterday, the Chancellor again refused to face the prospect of an oil price of $8 a barrel. He again preferred not to face the consequences of his policy of non-intervention. Yesterday, that was clearly revealed as the policy of the Chancellor rather than of the Secretary of State for Energy. The Chancellor and the Treasury are making what might be called an energy policy rather than the Secretary of State for Energy and the Department of

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Energy. The Chancellor, in his haste to wash his hands of the oil policy, pushed—metaphorically at least—the Energy Secretary aside to take the credit for the consequence of falling oil prices. He will continue to do so—provided, of course, that the price does not fall too far.

North sea oil, as the Chancellor predicted, wil last on a diminishing basis for another 25 years. I suppose that that will see the right hon. Gentleman and me through our respective lifetimes. I wonder what future generations will think, looking back at what I have described as this North sea oil bonanza. Will they ask: how was it spent? What happened to it? Where did it go? yesterday, the Chancellor would have been hard pushed to answer any questions on forward planning because he was living in the present—the everlasting present, as some of us might say. He was not prepared to look beyond what could happen if the oil price were to fall cataclysmically still further. He declared:

"If we can survive unscathed the loss of half our North sea oil revenues in less than 25 weeks, the prospective loss of the other half over the remainder of the next 25 years should not cause us undue concern."

The Chancellor will live to regret such statements. Even he had to admit:

"the really big gains will be made by the major non-oil-producing countries, such as Germany and Japan, where growth will be boosted and inflation, already low, is likely to fall virtually to zero."—[*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 168.]

The Chancellor was again acknowledging what he had denied—that British industry would not be in the same competitive position as industry in Japan or Germany. He might have added, for good measure, that we would not be in the same competitive position as France, Italy or the United States.

The Chancellor admitted that our oil exports would decrease, but he avoided giving details. He simply ignored the unpleasant facts. However, oil has accounted for more than 20 per cent. of all United Kingdom exports in the past three years. That represented a sterling value of £16·05 billion in 1985 and £14·85 billion in 1984. Net exports of oil were £8·2 billion and £6·9 billion, respectively, in those years.

Happy is the Chancellor who can sniff at the loss of such exports—happy, or ignorant, or living in a fool's paradise. The Chancellor was simply reinforcing his own self-fulfilling prophecy because, although the oil will last for another 25 years, the impact of lower revenues from it has been expected for some time, and the expectation was that the revenues would decrease as the volume of production fell. The fact that the loss has come earlier has given the Chancellor the opportunity to seek to prove his point—that our economy is essentially service-oriented and that the abolition of exchange controls since 1979 has permitted extra foreign investment. The return on that additional borrowing investment will cover the loss of North sea oil revenue.

The Chancellor said:

"Our net overseas assets have, in fact, risen more than sevenfold from £12 billion at the end of 1979 to almost £90 billion at the end of last year."

Some might feel that that is not a transfer of assets but theft from the British people. It is theft from investment in our country which could have created jobs in Britain, defended traditional industries and made us a competitive force in the world. Japan's success lies in its investment in its country, but we have signally failed to carry such investment forward here. Even the greatest failures that we have with the Chancellor have to be trumpeted as some kind of success.

Yesterday, the right hon. Gentleman said:

"This is a far bigger total than that possessed by any other major nation."

No other nation has invested £90 billion abroad. What other nation would be so crazy as to invest so much of its vital assets in the wealth of other countries? This must be the most lunatic economic policy in the world. The only other major country with larger net overseas assets is Japan, as the Chancellor said. He did not say that Japanese investment is aimed essentially to assist its manufacturing industry and to provide against the day when the major industrial countries begin to close their doors to Japanese imports—hence the Nissan factory in Washington in County Durham, where CKD sets from Japan will be converted into European manufactured goods for the European market.

British investment abroad has been essentially in services and in property. That does not provide work in Britain or safeguard jobs. It provides only profits in the best traditions of the Conservative party, of the Conservative Government and of the City of London. Even the Chancellor, with his usual sleight of hand—as I said, one must read his speeches carefully to see how he covers all his options—agrees that

"the British economy may not gain a great deal overall as a result of the oil price collapse"—[*Official Report*, 18 March 1986, Vol. 94, c. 168-69.]

Of course, there will be considerable differences within the economy. I can list one difference immediately. The fall in oil prices assists European plastics producers who are making their highest profits since the 1970s because the price of naphtha, the industry's chief raw material, has halved since the beginning of the year. There has been no benefit to the consumer. What happens to the consumer in regard to all the benefits? In the plastics industry prices have remained strong and some producers are even seeking increases. Therefore, the benefit is going straight into their pockets, not into the pockets of the consumers.

Yesterday the Chancellor took the easy way out by saying that the price of petrol should come down by about 12p; therefore, although he was putting a higher tax on petrol, he hoped that the petrol companies would not pass it on. How naive can he be? How easy it is to brush aside one's responsibility and put it upon others. Of course the petrol companies will increase their prices, and the extra money will come out of the pocket of the consumer. The electorate will not be fooled by such sleight of hand.

There will be losers because of the rapid fall in the price of oil. The losers will include oil companies, and many will go into bankruptcy. Those which wish to listen have already heard of the severe impact of the fall in oil prices on Texas and Louisiana, on oil drilling in Canada and even on new oil drilling in the North sea. Companies are already cutting back on investment, expansion and exploration because of the drop in the price of oil.

The Chancellor yesterday told us how the Government had weathered the storm of the year-long dispute in the coal industry when the pits were not working. What will happen to the plans for coal and to those who work in that industry as the generating plants of electricity boards change to oil because it will be cheaper? What crisis will we have again in the coal industry? What will the impact

of the fall in oil prices be on the module yards, to which I referred earlier, in the north of England and in Scotland? Will they continue to turn out production rigs? Will the refineries which take oil from the North sea find it prohibitive to continue to refine oil when the price falls below $13 a barrel? Will the oil last for even 25 years if exploration in the marginal fields is to cease?

Neither the Chancellor yesterday nor the Chief Secretary to the Treasury today referred to the financial consequences for debtor nations which, although they produce oil, still have to service the massive debts which they have accumulated since 1974. Already the combined current account deficits of Mexico, Egypt, Algeria, Iraq, Iran and Nigeria are projected to be $15 billion. There will have to be more borrowing on the international market from international banks just to enable those countries to stand still. I believe that Mexico has about $90,000 million of debt and needs another $9,000 million to cover the interest which it has to pay. Because of the fall in oil prices, Mexico no longer has the wherewithal to cover such a massive debt.

Probably the Chancellor has already foreseen the consequences of his non-policy on North sea oil production and prices. Already the familiar exercise of washing his hands and transferring the burden of responsibility has begun with the Budget statement. Of course, as he said, and as my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said earlier, the conditions are there for British industry to become more competitive. Again the Chancellor warned that labour costs would have to be kept down; but he said that there must be more investment in research, development and training. At least he referred yesterday to the need for more investment. Today the Chief Secretary to the Treasury said that it was the lack of investment in the 1970s which was the cause of the difficulties in industry. Yesterday the Chancellor said:

> "Both the opportunity, and the responsibility to see that it is not thrown aaway, rest fairly and squarely on the shoulders of British management."—[*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 169.]

Surely it rests fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the British Government and of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Thanks to the surplus from North sea oil, the surplus for the year on the balance of payments is £3·5 billion. It is like the man who, having thrown himself out of a window on the 25th floor, half way down says to himself, "This does not hurt a bit." There has already been reference to that twice in today's debate, perhaps because great minds think alike or because hon. Members have come to a sensible conclusion. Having lost £6,000 million of oil revenue in a few weeks and having braced himself for the loss of a further £3,000 million, the Chancellor is saying, "It does not hurt a bit." As oil exports fall and as oil prices are continually whittled away, it will bite on the balance of payments. The advantage of North sea oil will be thrown away even more quickly.

Even the Chancellor of the Exchequer yesterday, towards the end of his statement on oil, was reluctantly accepting the serious consequences of the free fall in oil prices for the Treasury. Again, in contradiction to the Chief Secretary, he said that North sea oil revenues, which were likely to be £11·5 billion for 1985-86, would be severely reduced in 1986-87.

I began by saying that the Chancellor had made a monumental blunder in regard to oil. He comforted himself by believing that the price of oil would stabilise at around $15 a barrel, thus halving North sea revenue to £6,000 million. What if the price should fall to $8 a barrel? The consequence will be that the tax revenue will be halved again to £3,000 million. Will the Treasury be able to live with that, too, or will it feel that the time has come to be prudent and to talk to the OPEC producers to see if there can be a planned rather than a free market in oil? We should have a market planned in the interests of consumers and producers.

The fall in the price of oil has presented the Government with an opportunity which they have not had until now. They can regain a position of influence in the world. They can seek to stabilise oil prices so that the gyrations in the price of oil from $12 to $30 a barrel and back again in a decade need not happen again. That would genuinely create conditions for a planned and steady growth that would be of benefit to the world. By washing his hands of that opportunity, the Chancellor lost the chance to show leadership. He lost the chance to show leadership in dealing with a scarce commodity, in preventing yet another energy crisis and in preventing the price of a barrel of oil from going up to $30. In the meantime he has brought closer the risk of a world monetary collapse, with debtor nations going bankrupt. He said that the British economy will find more minuses than pluses as other nation states take advantage of the lower oil prices to our detriment.

Again the Chancellor will have to tell the House that he got things wrong. Last year's Budget was to be a Budget for jobs. In the meantime, 116,000 more people have found themselves out of work. Yesterday he said that there would be no question of talking about a limitation on the production of North sea oil. As others have learnt before him, he, too, will learn that jaw-jaw is better than war-war on the oil front. In any event he will find that there will not be scope for his promised tax cuts. All there will be room for are more asset sales to keep the Budget afloat and to make up for the loss in revenue from North sea oil.

The debate should be constructive and objective rather than having the Chief Secretary to the Treasury seeking to score easy political points. The world has a major problem in the production of oil and its price. The Government have an opportunity to add their weight to the resolution of that problem. They refuse to do so for ideological reasons because they believe in the so-called free market. They do not believe in protecting our investment in the North sea.

It will be a tragedy for all the British people—for all those who work in the oil industry and for everyone else when we seek to help by the creation of jobs and the steadying of prices—if the Government do not, in the weeks and months ahead, take a lead, talk about oil production and prices and thus stabilise the world's energy market.

7.40 pm

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): It ill becomes the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) to lecture hon. Members after a speech lasting more than half an hour, about "jaw-jaw". So far as I could tell, the hon. Gentleman's speech could have been condensed into one sentence: we should join the OPEC cartel. He said that we

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should enter "meaningful negotiations". I took down his words. I assume that meaningful negotiations must have some intent or purpose.

Mr. Bell *rose*——

Sir Peter Hordern: I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not want to intervene. I shall give way, but the hon. Gentleman had better be quick.

Mr. Bell: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Every time one seeks to make a balanced and objective speech on oil prices and oil, the immediate response of Conservative Members is to say that we wish to join the OPEC cartel. That is not the policy of Her Majesty's Opposition. It is not the suggestion that has been made. We do not seek to join OPEC, nor do we advise the Government to do so. To enter into meaningful talks on oil production between OPEC and non-OPEC countries is a constructive suggestion, without the implication which the hon. Gentleman has given to it.

Sir Peter Hordern: I understand that the hon. Gentleman is a lawyer; I do not know whether he is. The truth of the matter is that, however it is wrapped up, meaningful negotiations, if they are to have any meaning, must lead to negotiations towards either production or price fixing. They cannot be otherwise.

I have listened to the hon. Gentleman at great length, and I can say only that if there were such a cartel I wonder how pleased his constituents would be to find that production had been curtailed and that the operations of the oil companies had been restricted in some way.

If it were the case that oil prices were a great deal higher than they are now, no doubt it would be good for our revenue, but it certainly would not be good for world trade, which has received a considerable impetus from the reduction in the price of oil, from which nobody can be calculated to have received greater benefit than Britain as one of the major industrial countries—a point which the Select Committee in the other place might have taken into account.

While I am on that point, the Select Committee might have referred in greater detail to the increase in wage costs which has occurred in Britain and which is still occurring. If the distinguished people on that Committee had bent their energies and influence to keeping down wage costs, which they may be in a position to do, our industry would be in a great deal better position than it is today.

In the introduction to the Green Paper on the reform of personal taxation my right hon. Friend the Chancellor reminds us that before the last war a married man on average earnings paid no income tax. In 1960 the threshold was 60 per cent. of average earnings, and I believe that it is now 38 per cent. My right hon. Friend was right to remind us that if the tax burden is to be further reduced the first need is to contain public expenditure, which, between 1964 and 1984, rose from 35 per cent. to about 45 per cent. of GDP.

After the many compliments that have been paid to my right hon. Friend, especially about charities, the business expansion scheme and the expertly aimed measures to help employment, I hope that I will not sound ungracious if I say that there is still a long way to go, not just in reducing taxation but in recasting our public expenditure so that it accurately reflects the social changes that have occurred over the past 20 years and is far more responsive to modern needs.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his new personal savings plan. It seems to form the third leg of a tripod, the first of which is to own one's own home, the second to provide for one's retirement, and now to provide a savings fund during one's lifetime. I have no doubt that this may take time to catch on, and perhaps it would have been better brought about through specific tax concessions such as in France and the United States. Whatever success there may be will bring with it an increasing sense of security and confidence which could have a profound social effect. I recognise that it is also designed to secure wider ownership, although unhappily not in quite such a generous way as the loi Monory in France.

Let me contrast the tax treatment of those who now wish to buy equities and those who seek to save in Government securities. For years, Government securities have had tax privileges not available to equities. Low coupon gilts, as well as index-linked stocks, have been free of capital gains tax if held to maturity, and only the income element has so far been taxable. Now, as a result of this new and welcome measure, investors may buy equities in their own fund which may be held free of tax on dividends and capital gains.

It would surely make sense to allow the same privilege for Government securities if they were held in a special fund. Otherwise there is bound to be some switching out of Government securities into this new equity fund. The equity fund is bound to be more favourably treated and more warmly received than gilt-edged securities.

I yield to nobody in my admiration for wider share ownership, but there is much to be said for the incentives for saving generally and not just in equities. The savings ratio generally has fallen recently and the real returns now available on Government securities are most attractive. There is a real need, as many who have contributed to this debate have already said, to bring interest rates down. That would be helped by switching from consumption to saving, because lower interest rates encourage investment and it is investment which is fuelling the West German economy.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor mentioned West Germany as a country which benefits relatively more from the fall in oil prices than we do and that is true. Indeed, if one takes into account the recent reduction in taxation in West Germany, which amounts to 13 billion deutschmarks, and adds to that the benefit to the economy from the drop in the price of oil, that produces at least another 13 billion deutschmarks.

This extra demand in West Germany that makes West Germany an extremely attractive target for our own exporters, but of course the West Germans are tough competitors. Last year in West Germany prices rose by 1·3 per cent. and the latest figures show that the rate of inflation is now 0·7 per cent. If things go on as they are there could be a negative rate of inflation. Prices could fall in real terms in West Germany. Over a year ago its prices fell by 1·3 per cent. and its wages are rising by 3·3 per cent. At the moment our prices are rising by 5 per cent. and our wages are rising by 8·6 per cent. The other important point is that three months' money in Germany is 4·5 per cent. In the United Kingdom, even after the drop in the interest rate, it is over 11 per cent.

How is it that the West Germans manage to keep not only their inflation rate but their interest rate so low? They do so by the strictest control of their money supply, and in particular through the control of their central bank money stock. This includes the currency held by non-banks and the required minimum reserves on banks' domestic liability. The only point about this is that monetary policy in West Germany is strictly applied and for the past two or three years, our monetary policy has been at the very least confusing and, in the more important sense, hardly in existence at all. Not only does monetary policy work for the West Germans in the sense that inflation is controlled, but it allows for a continuing regime of low interest rates, which encourage investment.

There are many good things going on in our economy, such as the control of inflation and the record in growth, and I yield to no one in the admiration that I hold for the Government for the way in which they have succeeded in reducing the rate of inflation and advancing the rate of economic growth. However, our level of inflation owes much to the fall in commodity prices, which are now 20 per cent. down from a year ago, and many former Chancellors would have liked such a thing to happen to them.

Growth is uncomfortably dependent at present on consumer expenditure in our economy. Real personal disposable income is due to increase by 5 per cent. this year, and most of this will be reflected in higher spending. That is what the money supply continues to reflect. The M3 statistic is designed no longer to represent a target, but as a sort of running commentary on how free and easy credit is. There is no attempt to regulate the monetary figures, as used to be the case, by selling more gilts than necessary to fund the borrowing requirement—there is over-funding. Instead, we have, as the House must accept, a plastic card economy, which will fuel the consumer boom that is going on. In turn, this is likely to lead to further pressures on wage increases, which will be readily conceded by the likes of Sir John Harvey-Jones, who has the nerve to criticise the Government for not reducing the price of sterling and allowing his products to become more competitive.

In the absence of monetary policy, the Government have only one method to counter defeatist industrialists of the kind who wrote to the House of Lords Select Committee, and that is the interest rate, which will be used whenever it looks as though the exchange rate is falling too far.

However, the interest rate is too blunt a weapon. It would be better to have a proper monetary policy, like the West Germans, so that we can have stable prices and much lower interest rates. In its absence, it is now a complete mystery to me why we have not joined the European monetary system. If we were to join, we should have the additional protection that a closer association with the deutschmark will bring. Somebody must think that it is a bad idea. I do not know who it is, but whoever it is, whether a he or a she, some explanation, of which the House can determine its relative importance, should be given.

It matters that our interest rates are so much higher than anybody else's in real terms. It matters to the Government as well that this is the case. In 1982 and 1983, interest on Government loans amounted to £14·5 billion. The forecast for the coming year is that it will be £18·2 billion. That is 11 per cent. of total expenditure. It is clear that if interest rates remain at the same level as they are, this level and proportion of public debt will assume even greater proportion than it now has of total expenditure. Therefore, from every point of view, it is desirable to reduce the burden of interest rates on Government, expenditure and industry.

It is worth noting that the level of consumer credit is now at an all-time high and growing fast. I notice that in the first three quarters of this financial year, consumer credit was as high as for the whole of the previous year, which was itself at a record level. The evidence points to the need to encourage savings and, besides tax concessions to help industry in many ways, there should be tax concessions on saving. Perhaps the best form would be to encourage the portable pension schemes by more generous concessions. It is horrifying how poorly protected we are for old age. Only a tiny minority retire with two thirds of final salary, and I notice what a powerful position the National Association of Pension Funds has. It had only to fire a few shots across the bows of the Government last year to produce a retreat. It is disgraceful that more is not known of the true level of pension for the great majority of those who retire from occupational schemes.

Most people change jobs at some time in their life, and therefore carry with them only their contributions plus a tiny amount. That is never admitted by the National Association of Pension Funds. Nor does it say that the proportion of people who are protected, so-called, by pension funds remains at about 50 per cent., with the other 50 per cent. of people who retire having no occupational pensions at all. Therefore, the case for portable personal pensions is strong.

There should be tax concessions, of the kind that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has started, in an encouraging way, with his support for personal equity savings, to encourage people to contribute to funds much more than they are likely to do with the rather slim concessions in the social security White Paper, which does not go far enough.

The prospects for the growth of world trade are excellent, for the very reasons that the hon. Member for Middlesbrough was deploring—the fall in the price of oil. It would be good if we could have a larger share in the increase of foreign consumption rather than depend as much as we do on domestic consumption. If we are to have that, we need lower interest rates, which would come from higher savings as well as a low borrowing requirement. It would help nationalised industries in their borrowing and it would help local authorities. It is not enough to keep public borrowing low. We have to have a long-term review of all our public expenditure.

I have to ask why it is that the pattern of our public expenditure is so very different from those of other countries. I recognise that education will never be properly funded while it is supported by the rate support grant, which in its turn is reduced every year as a matter of fixed policy.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): The rate support grant is reduced only by this Government.

Sir Peter Horden: That is not the case. The rate support grant has been reduced by successive Governments over a long time.

Education should be directly funded, like the Health Service, and it is time to look at the organisation and

[Sir Peter Horden]

structure of public expenditure. For example, when will we stop supporting cereal farmers? Is there any need for a whole tier of health authorities—the regional health authorities? Why has it been necessary to spend £5,000 million on torpedoes? Could we not have the housing benefit properly reformed in integrating the tax and benefits system?

I think that there is a good case for a Green Paper on public expenditure. We have a good Green Paper on the taxation of husband and wife which breaks new ground and I think that if we were to have a similar Green Paper on a long-term review of public expenditure, we would see whether our public resources are being properly directed.

I think that it is quite right to boost enterprise with job creation schemes as well as training schemes, which are involved in this Budget and in other ways. However, what about education for the large number of youngsters who have not been able to find work? Are we sure that our education budget is sufficient under the present system? Are we directing public expenditure in the best way available? I believe that the whole of our public expenditure needs to be reviewed to see that it is being properly used.

I believe that in our system we have a little too much interest and emphasis on tax reform and not enough on the reform of public expenditure. Much could be done to help housing and other important matters in our economy. The most direct way of doing so would be the abolition of rent control for first time lets. I hope that that will be introduced as soon as we win the next election and that no further excuses will be given. There is nothing worse than the sight of those who want to accept work in busy parts of the country, such as the area I am fortunate enough to represent, only to find that there is nowhere to live. The sooner the Rent Act 1977 is abolished, the better.

I give my right hon. Friend's Budget a sincere welcome. I hope that what I have said will be accepted as a long-term look at what I still think is desirable—the imbalance of our enthusiasm for tax reform and not enough attention to the essential reform of public expenditure.

8.2 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): My views to some extent accord with those of the hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) on the oil price. I have given that matter much thought over the past few weeks and I increasingly draw the conclusion that what is happening to the oil price may spark off a new era in world trade and have a major impact. My natural planning and interventionist instincts have somehow had to be subdued on the question of the oil price and even on the question of negotiations with the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries. I think that there is an argument for keeping out.

That may well appear to be the kind of argument that a Socialist should not advocate. However, I think that the moment we enter into discussions with OPEC, by our presence we imply controls on production and certainly some desire to introduce a mechanism into the pricing arrangements for oil. That in itself may well put a block on the development of world trade. I think that we all have that in common.

I dissent from the view expressed by the hon. Member for Horsham, because I am not altogether convinced that Britain is equipped in every way to deal with the surge in world trade which might arise. I know that falling oil prices have had a good effect on the exchange rate, in that sterling has fallen, and that must obviously help our export efforts. However, even then are we equipped? Do we have the pool of adequately trained people to support the sort of industrial take-off which might take place? Is it not fair to say that substantial damage has been done to the British economy over the past few years, certainly to the industrial base, and that we might not be able to deal with it in the way that we should?

There is another problem. If we accept a non-interventionist policy on oil prices—of which, as I say, I am generally in favour—I think that we must be very wary of political developments in the middle east. They are matters that we would do well not to ignore. Islamic fundamentalism and its growth is geared in many ways to the failure of middle eastern economies, and we must take those matters into account when we take decisions and draw conclusions.

When I was asked yesterday by my local television station, Border Television, what I thought of the Budget, I summed it up by saying that there were a few interesting delicacies to be found, but, in general, it was the same old main course of cod and chips which really would not succeed in putting my constituents, and certainly not the people of Cumbria, back to work.

This is not an imaginative Budget. There are a number of small and interesting measures. For example, I think that the measures introduced to help charities will have a major impact. We should not under-estimate their potential effect on the funding of charities. However, we must not get those minor changes, although they may be important to charities, out of proportion. The effect of the Budget is quite neutral. It will have no real effect on demand in the economy. Indeed, the business men who say to us all the time that enterprise packages require increasingly buoyant markets and increases in consumption, will be upset by this Budget. They may well be making positive noises now, but within a matter of months the truth will sink in and they will realise that we are really in for very little change in the medicine we have had over the past few years.

I want to address my comments to the issue of the £24 billion about which Conservative Members have spoken repeatedly and, I must say, quite successfully over the past week. It is obviously an orchestrated campaign on the Tory Benches. They are feeding out the questions at Prime Minister's Question Time on Tuesdays and Thursdays and they are using every opportunity to discredit the Labour party and its alleged programme.

The £24 billion has no basis. Any hon. Gentleman who does his homework will quickly establish that it has been drawn from a few grey statements and inferences about the priorities of a future Labour Government. It is no more than that. Some Treasury official, pinched by a Minister, has been instructed to put a price on it, and we are now left in the House defending the accusations of the Government who have whole Departments costing out those things. The figure is wrong.

I can say that a Labour Government will increase expenditure in a number of areas. We will easily find the money. If I am right about the impact of the oil price and its affect on world trade and if I am right that the policies of the Labour Government to put people back to work will generate additional wealth which will have to be taxed and

therefore increase the tax take of the Labour Treasury, that will provide funds. If I am right that every year since 1979, on average, £3·65 billion of taxation has been removed from the richer people in society and we are to restore levels of taxation, if not to the former levels of 1979, certainly to far greater levels than currently exist for the top 5 per cent., that will produce funds. I believe that, from those sources we will find sufficient money to fund the programme of the next Labour Government, who, in my view, will be elected in 1988.

The problem is that the campaign being waged by Conservative Members may well be getting through today, but in the long term it will not get through. Last weekend on "This Week, Next Week" we saw a junior Minister from the Department of Health and Social Security, pushed into a corner and realising that he was about to be caught out, making statements which he knew were not true. When he was asked by Mr. David Dimbleby where a Labour Government would find the money to fund the child benefit, pension and other benefit increases, he said that we would raise it by way of national insurance contributions. He insisted, throughout 15 minutes of that programme, on adopting that line, knowing that it was not true and that it had already been denied by my right hon. Friend the Shadow Chancellor.

It is obvious that this campaign is being organised on the basis of telling a series of lies. I am not referring to statements in the House, because I know that I am not allowed to use such a word in relation to statements by Ministers, but I can refer to them outside. In the end, when the truth comes out, Conservative Members will have undermined their whole campaign. If they attempt to go into the next election on the basis of a lie, they will quickly be found out. We should remember the headline in the *Daily Mail* in the 1979 general election. A major lie was told to fool hundreds of thousands of people. It will never happen again.

In his statement, the Chancellor referred to the enterprise culture. That is an interesting term. The first phase of the Government's enterprise culture was the introduction of the business expansion scheme in 1982. It provides us with a good basis on which to examine the success of that approach. I supported the business expansion scheme in part on its introduction, on the basis that it could direct funds into small manufacturing industry. To that extent, it has failed because the Chancellor has refused, apart from a minor amendment last year connected with land, to intervene where abuses are going on. According to the Inland Revenue's statistics, published this year, only 4·4 per cent. of the £700 million invested by the year 1983-84 had gone to the north-west and the north of England, only 12·8 per cent. had been invested in Scotland, Wales, the north-west and the north, and 61 per cent. had been invested in London, the south-east, the south-west and East Anglia. Therefore, there is an emphasis on the south in the location of funding from the business expansion scheme.

Those areas do not provide the industrial base, the engine room, of the British economy in terms of industrial and manufacturing industry. One must ask why the scheme was not devised in such a way that more emphasis was placed on the need to back manufacturing industry in the regions. Under the scheme, most of the money is being invested in the very areas where we have the highest employment—that is to say, the lowest unemployment. If one looks at the regional location of firms financed under the business expansion scheme, one finds that only 8 per cent. are in the north-west and north-east of England, while 53 per cent. are in the south-east, London and the home counties. That is a major problem for the Government, which they should examine. I know that it is hard to regionalise the tax system, but further amendment to the scheme might have the effect of generating business enterprise, certainly in manufacturing, in the areas of the United Kingdom where unemployment is at its highest.

The second phase of the enterprise culture to which the Chancellor referred yesterday is to be found in the personal equity plan that he announced. At first glimpse, I thought that it might take off. I was not endorsing the principle, mainly because I think that it is unnecessary. However, I am not now altogether convinced that it will take off. I have been able to establish that, due to the high threshold for capital gains tax, which this year is to be raised from £5,700 to £6,300, only a small number of people buying personal equity plan packages will benefit from this half of the beneficial arrangements available under the scheme. I should have thought that they would have to invest £20,000, £30,000, £40,000 or £50,000 before they saw any benefit, depending on the level of capital gain. They might benefit from the dividend payment arrangements, but that would never be sufficient to generate enough public interest.

If great public interest is generated, a time bomb will be placed at the heart of the enterprise culture. People like to buy shares when they are going up. Some might say that today we are in bull times, but what happens when we are in bear times? What happens when the market begins to fall, and people point a finger at the Government and say, "It's your fault. That is why we are losing."? A sense of recrimination will set in against the Government if there is a fall in the market. It is highly likely that there will be a fall. The public might be insulated from the fall by the big bang and the interest that it will engender in the City in November, but I believe that it is inevitable that the stock market will fall. In those conditions, many people will be lured into share ownership under the principle of the enterprise culture and the personal equity plan, and, when their investments fall, they will blame the Government.

Furthermore, to some extent those people might come under the looser arrangements in the City after November following the big bang. They might be lured into buying shares that they should never have bought. Under the arrangements in the Financial Services Bill the policing of the City is to be carried out by a private company, the Securities and Investments Board Ltd. It is not a public authority that will police standards in the City; it is a private organisation. There are great dangers in that, certainly if there are failures. Public perception of the City will be affected. A public reaction might set in against many City institutions, which would be unreasonable.

The employment premium scheme provides people with £40 a week if they go into business and if they can cough up the additional £1,000 for the funding of their enterprise. Under the Budget proposals, there is an increase in the number of places available, from 60,000 to 100,000. The complaints that I have heard were about not only the number of places available, but the value of the payment. The sum of £40 a week is too little. That sum should have been inflation-proofed this year.

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

Many people want to go into business, but find that they can neither raise the £1,000 nor manage on the £40 a week. We are talking about people on the lowest rung of the enterprise ladder. Every help should have been given to them. I vigorously supported the introduction of an allowance when it was first announced by the Government some two or three years ago, following the original six pilot schemes. A mistake has been made. That money should have been raised. Money for capital gains tax or capital transfer tax reductions should have been earmarked for that scheme.

I have a reservation about the community programme. The number of places is to be increased by some 20 per cent. Under the present arrangements, the only people over 25 who can apply for support under the scheme are those on supplementary benefit. That is wrong, because it excludes many people who should be entitled to community programme places. I know that the allocation of places is in favour of those who have been unemployed for more than 12 months, but people who have been unemployed for less than 12 months have an equal right to employment. People throughout the country, certainly my constituents, are sore about that.

Three months ago when the rate support grant settlement was notified to Cumbria, we realised that a great deal of money had been cut from our budget and that, unless we slashed services in a way which the people in the county would find unacceptable — many Conservatives want the services provided by Cumbria county council—the rates would have to increase. No one wanted to do that, but they were increased to compensate for the loss in rate support grant. Yesterday's tax reductions do not cover the rates increase for the majority of people in the county. They are of no consequence to us. What the Government have taken away with one hand they may have given us with the other, but it is insufficient to match our needs.

8.20 pm

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I shall endeavour to be brief, to allow my colleagues who have sat throughout the debate to have an opportunity to speak.

We have been living with the collapse of oil prices for so many weeks now that many of us have been conditioned to limit our expectations about the Budget. So, like most people, I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what appears to be an ingenious Budget, handing out so much and satisfying so many interests. However, I paused this morning after reading the comments of adulation or criticism, depending on the newspaper, to consider how the Budget may affect my constituents. I have listened to the speeches of Labour Members who represent Scottish constituencies, and they make me wonder what part of Scotland I come from because the evidently gloomy picture which they paint is not shared in every part of my constituency.

There is unemployment and the worrying problem of young people who have been unemployed for some time. Therefore, I listened particularly attentively to the measures which the Chancellor announced to assist the long-term unemployed. When I visit local factories I invariably ask the management what it expects of Government, and what the Government can do to help it. After one overlooks a particular gripe, whether for more public expenditure or whatever, management invariably settles for stable economic conditions, low inflation, the prospect of economic growth and, particularly, for lower interest rates.

Managements must all welcome this morning's change in the latter respect. They will have seen the confirmation of those conditions in the Chancellor's forecasts yesterday. When asked about the prospects of employing more people they say that they seek some incentive to make it worthwhile. I hope that the new workers scheme will prove to be a financial incentive to employers, that they will be prepared to take it up and, through it, to generate employment.

I am pleased, as are many of my hon. Friends, that the national restart scheme will provide, not just an allowance, but the opportunity for the long-term unemployed to have a counselling session. There can be no better way to restore the morale of a person who has experienced unemployment for a long time than the knowledge that somebody is sufficiently concerned and is taking a continued interest in one's plight.

Opposition Members condemned the community programme for its shortcomings, but I have seen some of the excellent work that it does. Eighteen months ago when there was a shortage of take-up in the south and places were transferred north of the border, the community programme made a significant surge forward in parts of the west of Scotland where it has already significantly improved some of the areas of dereliction, and provided training for young people into the bargain. They are imaginative, successful schemes, and we should all welcome them.

While I particularly welcome the increase in the number of places, I find, from constituency experience, some of the rules about eligibility particularly irksome. It does not seem reasonable that a man who has been unemployed for more than the qualifying period and who possesses experience to make a significant, worthwhile contribution to the scheme but who happens to have a wife working part time should be excluded. I shall continue to make representations to Ministers to relax the rules in such cases.

I am interested to see further encouragement for the enterprise allowance scheme. Recently, I met several young participants who had taken advantage of the scheme. Contrary to what the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) says, they were self starters and had pulled themselves up off the ground. They showed enormous pride in what they could achieve by being self-employed. The importance of proper financial control of a business should be emphasised during the vetting procedure. No matter how talented or how much flair people may have for sales and marketing, if they cannot control the finances of a business, it will not ultimately be successful. There is a responsibility on professional firms to respond with the services that these people need.

We must not allow these improvements in job creation schemes to be obscured by the chorus of critics on the Opposition Benches saying that they are not enough or that there should not be tax cuts. The argument that tax cuts and spending on jobs are mutually exclusive is wholly fallacious. I make no apology for taking the time of the House to say again that tax reductions stimulate demand, which in turn creates lasting, worthwhile jobs. We should be prepared to take the political kudos for lifting 500,000

people out of tax paying altogether and, more particularly in our tax-cutting measures, to direct the principal benefit of those cuts to those on average wages and below. The Opposition cannot have it both ways. They cannot criticise the Government for increasing the tax burden, as the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) did, and then condemn our efforts to reduce that burden in the Budget.

My constituents who are happily in business will be encouraged by the Budget's incentives. I welcome the abolition of capital transfer tax on lifetime transfers. From professional experience I have seen how that tax has borne down—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) may laugh. It may benefit her to speak to the people who create work and provide employment and who have had to live with that tax. The diversion of management skills into looking at ways to carry on a family business while that tax has existed is a complete waste of time. I hope that its abolition will prove worth while to those who wish to pass on family businesses and create employment.

I am delighted to see that the Chancellor has lost none of his enthusiasm for abolishing taxes. My right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will know that on previous occasions I have offered advice about taxes which may be abolished. Development land tax has been abolished, and today I remind him of capital gains tax. Despite the Finance Act 1985, it remains an iniquitous tax in that it taxes inflationery gains pre-1982. It is probably a disincentive to investment, and it should be a candidate for abolition in 1987, with short-term gains being taxed as income and with a taper for gains on assets held between one and three years.

I am aware that many colleagues wish to speak, so I shall comment on the Budget proposals on charities. I am encouraged and refreshed by the Chancellor's reiteration yesterday of the importance of the voluntary sector. Charities do excellent work, and I am delighted that the Budget proposals recognise that fact. It is good to reverse the automatic conditioning whereby people constantly look to the state to fulfil their every need. The voluntary sector can often fulfil those needs far more efficently.

For many years I have been involved with a Scottish hospital, the Princess Louise Scottish hospital for the war wounded. It does outstandingly good work and about £3 million a year is needed to run it. The hospital frequently complains about the imposition of value added tax on the medical equipment that it requires. It benefits from the largesse of social schemes run by companies and from the contributions that it receives from other voluntary bodies. I am glad that the Budget contains proposals that will encourage company donations and employee tax deductions. I am certain that that hospital, like many other charities, will benefit from the Budget proposals.

Once again I say, as a Scot, to my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury that the Scotch whisky industry will appreciate the assistance that this year's Budget has given it. During the proceedings in Committee on previous Finance Bills I have criticised the burdens that are placed on that industry. It is vital to Scotland. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) does not recognise the importance of this industry to exports, wealth creation and employment in Scotland. I am certain that the industry will welcome the relief that was afforded it yesterday.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his brevity. I understand that the first Front Bench speakers will seek to catch my eye at about 9.15 pm. I see that about five hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye, so the arithmetic is fairly obvious.

8.33 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): I noticed with some amusement the anger shown by the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) when the Opposition expressed dissent from his comments on capital transfer tax. I wish that I had constituents who could afford to worry about it. Many thousands of my constituents are faced with a much more pressing problem. It is called worrying about a job, or trying to find work for school leavers. Most of my constituents could afford to transfer only their social security payments. They could not transfer their wealth.

What will this Budget do for St. Helens? Will it increase its industrial base? The Budget contains no proposals to aid construction or to encourage investment that might produce more jobs in St. Helens. We talk about capital gains tax. I should like to know how many of my constituents could afford to put aside £200 a month. Many of them have to live on £200 a month. They have to try to keep a family on £200 a month. The idea of saving £200 a month can be only a dream to them. If the Budget meant that every elector in my constituency could put aside £200 a month, we should be going somewhere.

The Budget is supposed to result in a penny off income tax. I ask myself what that means to those who live and, if they are lucky, work in St. Helens. The reality is that if somebody earns under £80 a week it does not mean very much. It means piffling pence. If somebody earns between £80 and £150, again it means piffling pence. Many of my constituents would give their right arm to be able to earn £150 a week.

My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) said that the rates will be increased. Of course they will be increased. Rate support grant is being cut. Furthermore, the abolition of the metropolitan counties will result in an increase in rates. In St. Helens it will result in an increase of 22p in the pound on the rates. That is the consequence of taking over services that were formerly provided by the disbanded metropolitan authority. It is ridiculous to dismantle something that costs money and then to find that the cost of dismantling it imposes an extra burden on the people who live in the area.

Treasury Ministers have the gall to tell those who live in the north of England that this is supposed to be an adventurous Budget, a forward-looking Budget. It is anything but that. It is a Budget of mudge and fudge, of fiddle and squeeze, of giving a little bit more to those who have already got an awful lot of it and doing nothing for those who are at the bottom end of the scale. Oh yes, they have got their allowances and their tax thresholds and a penny has been taken off the standard rate of income tax. But the reality is that the Government have forgotten about the rates that people will have to pay. They have forgotten that in reality this Budget means a few extra pence per week for the average family, if members of that family are lucky enough to have jobs.

The Government keep telling us that they are good for the country and that the Budget is good for the country.

[Mr. Gerald Bermingham]

If the Government had any go about them they would be asking themselves, "How can we get Britain back to work?" I look at the figures contained in the Budget. I am no economist——

Mr. Hirst: Hear, hear.

Mr. Bermingham: The hon. Gentleman says, "Hear, hear." The reality is that I can read a balance sheet and can tell when funds are not being utilised properly.

Last year, £5 billion were held in the reserve. This year, £4·5 billion will be held in the reserve. If I understood the Chancellor's speech correctly, a little of it is to be used for his advice shops for the long-term unemployed. How about the Government being really adventurous and using the rest of the reserve? It should be used for creating jobs in the construction industry. It should be put into the public sector. The Government should take a gamble and do what the Americans have done. They should invest in this country. They should not allow the money to go abroad. The Government will not waste the £4·5 billion by investing it. It might result in getting people back to work. Then they might want to buy goods. They would also pay tax and national insurance contributions. They would not have to draw the dole or get supplementary benefit. If the Government did that, we should begin to cheer.

There is an old economic maxim which goes like this: speculate to accumulate That is as true of individuals as it is of countries and Governments. If the Government believe that they are good for Britain, they should invest in Britain. They should not for ever be thinking of chopping, scrimping and saving. They should not for ever be thinking of what this country can do without. They should begin to think about investing in Britain and putting people back to work. It is not a very adventurous suggestion, but I do not expect for one second that it will be taken on board by the Government.

The Government are headed by a Prime Minister who will sell anything. They intend to sell off the water industry and British Airways. They have already sold off British Telecom. It reminds me of the shopkeeper who sold the shelves. The reality is that we are selling, not investing. But to invest would be to think forward: to think forward about how we can give back respectability and a future to the people of this country.

The object of the Budget must be to help, to encourage, to build. In reality, this Budget helps nobody. Unless one is at the top end of the scale, nobody is helped. What encouragement does this Budget provide for the people of St. Helens? In reality, it means very little to them. The people of St. Helens could tell the Government about the amount of money that needs to be injected into the local economy. They could tell the Government about the need for money to be spent on public sector housing and new houses for first-time buyers, upon industry and the infrastructure. if the Government adopted that policy, the glassworks of St. Helens and its other factories would begin to produce goods and employ people. That is what the people of St. Helens want. But what are they getting? As I said earlier, very few of the people of St. Helens have £200 a month to invest. I say again that many of my constituents have less than £200 a month on which to live. I say to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, do not bring in a Budget that offers so little because it insults so many.

8.40 pm

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): The Leader of the Liberal party, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), is on record as saying that the Government must be judged by their stewardship of the economy. That is indeed an acid test.

Let us cast our minds back to ascertain the precedent. Under both Conservative and Labour Governments since the war there has been a continual series of stop-go policies. What do we see now? Since 1979 there has been steady growth and clear policies, which are key ingredients to investment into the economy both from outside and within.

Where we saw low growth, we see high growth. Our growth is the highest throughout Europe. Indeed, it is even higher than that of the United States. Where we saw high inflation, we see low inflation. Amazingly, inflation has been controlled and pulled down from a staggering high of 27 per cent. Where we saw balance of payments deficits, we see continual balance of payments surpluses. Where we saw low productivity and low profitability, we see high productivity and high profitability.

Where we saw employment decreasing, we see employment rising. Indeed, Britain has achieved the highest rate of job creation throughout Europe over the past two years. We see job creation, wealth creation and the promise of being able to afford to spend much more on improvements to law and order, education, health and social services.

All this has been achieved despite a crippling one-year miners' strike and the loss of £5·5 billion of our oil revenues—that is half of our oil revenues—in less than six months. We now have a steady and growing economy. There is solid, quality growth that is not only non but anti-inflationary. What is most impressive is that it is the manufacturing sector, or non-oil sector, of the economy that has allowed the Chancellor of the Exchequer to be generous in his Budget. I point especially to the treatment of charities. The package for charities is the best that has been offered by any Chancellor.

The leader of the Liberal party set an acid test and the Government have shown that they have achieved that which has eluded all other Governments since the war. They have managed the British economy prudently and successfully and I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, his predecessor, his team and the Government generally.

The Budget is courageous as well as being filled with ingenuous and constructive measures. In the long term it is an employment, enterprise and wealth-creating Budget. My right hon. Friend was courageous in resisting the temptation to finance the shortfall in oil revenues by raising the borrowing requirement and, therefore, putting upward pressure on sterling interest rates. It is essential that he continues to manage the economy on a sound and prudent footing and with clear policies because that will create confidence, which in turn will create investment.

I am pleased that my right hon. Friend abolished the tax on lifetime gifts but I am sorry that he did not announce the abolition of capital gains tax. In my opinion CGT is unfair and it wastes an enormous amount of management or enterprise time.

The ingenuity that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has shown in the Budget is outstanding. He was boxed in by the fall in oil revenues, yet he has

produced a superbly balanced and creative Budget. The raising of income tax thresholds, skewed heavily towards the lower paid, and the reduction in the basic rate of income tax has achieved a good balance, especially in the light of the NIC measures taken in the last budget.

The withholding tax on foreign performers is innovative. It will not have an adverse effect on them because they would have paid tax in their own countries in any event. The yield of £75 million will finance the capital transfer tax changes, the personal equity plan and the transfer of the pension calculation date from November to April.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer achieved a major initiative in removing some of the discriminatory tax privileges that past Governments have given to the pension funds, which were leading to over-funding. This led to the siphoning off of moneys into major institutions and away from individual hands, and the large institutions have the very worst record of investing in venture capital.

The Budget is constructed to enhance enterprise, and as chairman of the Conservative small businesses committee I thank my right hon. Friends the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Financial Secretary for meeting many of the measures for which we have been campaigning. I suspect that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, who was the Minister with responsibility for small businesses, also had some important influence in this area. From a small business point of view, the Budget is outstanding. It is extremely creative. Some of the most notable measures are the raising of VAT thresholds to the EEC maximum, the extension of the loan guarantee scheme and the abolition of the lifetime gifts tax. Those are three substantial measures.

The abolition of the gifts tax must not be under-estimated. There are those who argue against it, and in effect they are arguing for a one-generation economy. It is difficult to start a new business and it is even more difficult to start a successful one. A new business has to meet competition, and when it grows its markets will become increasingly competitive. This measure will prove invaluable when it comes to raising finance to enable the business to expand in competitive international markets where financing "flow production" is often the key.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer was absolutely right to close the loopholes in the business expansion scheme. It is important to concentrate the scheme on high-risk, low-asset companies.

The personal equity plan is an outstanding development for enterprise and a real step forward in the creation of venture capital. It is individuals who are both the natural and most efficient investors of venture capital, and not institutions. Individuals better understand and often know individual entrepreneurs, and on the whole they make the most successful investments.

There are no easy answers to dealing with unemployment and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer should be praised for resisting popular gimmicks. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, argued that the Government must finance and create jobs; he must learn that it is customers, not financiers, who create jobs. He must realise also that it is entrepreneurs who create customers. The Government have gone for the creation of real jobs that are financed by customers. The Government have created an enterprise culture that will encourage the creation of jobs by encouraging entrepreneurs to start businesses and succeed.

The Government are helping by initiating training schemes. They are spending £2·5 billion on the youth training scheme and they are now offering advice in a consultation process. I welcome the spread nationally of the job club and the job start programmes.

The clear message of the Budget is that the non-oil economy is growing steadily in an anti-inflationary way. The economy is under sound and successful management, which is the envy of those in other political parties and of most Governments in the developed world. The Budget offers real reason for thanks and real hope for better things to come.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and his team of Ministers and Civil Servants. They have done an outstanding job.

8.50 pm

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): Budget days are usually exciting. However, I have been a Member of this place for seven years and I can say that yesterday was as flat as a pancake. The Government have been in office for seven years and we have had seven years of misery. The Government have blamed the previous Labour Government on numerous occasions for the actions that they have taken. Time is running out for apportioning blame on previous Governments. How many years do the Government need to get the economy going? If seven years is not enough, what do they need—70 years? The Government have an abysmal record.

I was fascinated last night watching the Chancellor making his statement on television. He used graphs during his statement on television, and it struck me how selective he was with his illustrations. On some occasions he quoted from 1983, not from 1979 when this Government came into power. On other occasions he switched and quoted from 1973 and 1974 when there was a world oil crisis. That was the sort of comparison he was making. However, he never presented the people with a graph showing the implications of mass unemployment. He was afraid to put that on the television screens, because it would have shown the people the monstrosity that unemployment has become since this Government came to office.

One after another, Conservative Members have congratulated the Chancellor but I liked the comment made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), that he would not even buy a secondhand bike from the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit). That sentiment will be shared by many people outside this House.

What is wrong with this Budget is that there is no sharing of prosperity. It is the same theme as the one we have had from 1979. Since then there has been the selfishness of consistently giving to the rich, and this Budget is no different.

People have gradually recognised that tax reductions ought not to be the first priority. The Government and Conservative Members proclaim this great achievement of a 1p tax reduction, but I can tell the Government and those hon. Members that people will not jump and shout and sing in the streets about a 1p tax cut. The people that I represent will hardly even notice it. Many industrialists said that tax reductions were not essential to get the economy right. Along with the people, those industrialists

[Mr. Ken Eastham]

said that the best way to use any available money would be by investment in industry. Not only did they call for investment in industry, but they said there ought to be more money for technology and research. We claim that in the long run investments will create prosperity that everyone can share, not just the people in the stock exchange.

We need more skill training. It is ironic that we have a shortage of skilled people, yet this Government in their campaign to make cuts and so-called savings have closed skillcentres. I am a member of the Select Committee on Employment, and nobody is more conscious of the horrific unemployment figures than I am. The measures outlined in the Budget come nowhere near solving some of the problems in that area. After seven years of this Government, we have 3·2 million unemployed. That is the official figure, but it is probably far higher than that. If it were not for the massaging of the figures, we would know the true extent of the problem. Some 1,352,000 have been workless for over a year; 193,000 under 25-year-olds have been workless for between six and 12 months; and 532,000 people have been unemployed for over three years. People are just rotting away, and many of them are highly skilled people. People who are over 50 will probably never work again.

There has been a lack of investment in the infrastructure, and hon. Members who represent city constituencies will recognise the grave deficiencies in housing alone. There is massive unemployment in the building trades, yet there is a desperate need for houses. In the Budget there is no mention of a surge forward to revitalise the building industry, even though people are crying out for help.

Contrary to the Government's claim about investment, there ought to be more massive investment in the National Health Service. I tabled a question today on the behalf of some of the pensioners in my constituency. They ask what kind of sacrifices they are expected to make. It appears that some health authorities are posing questions about a system based on what is referred to as a quality adjusted life years formula. The Government are saying that they have less money for the Health Service. People who are getting on in years and reaching retirement age are asked about their possible life expectancy and the Government are asking whether they should be spending money on such people or saving it. That is creating horror in the minds of old people, but those are the sort of cuts being introduced.

The Chancellor says he has a certain amount of money to spend, but some pensioners are living with cuts year in, year out. Hon. Members will remember that two or three weeks ago there was talk about hardship over the expense of fuel. What mention has been made about giving assistance to old people for fuel bills? There is also hardship relating to transport but things like that do not matter to the Government or to Conservative Members. They are important issues that we should be considering.

This is a cosmetic Budget. The Government are more interested in the stock exchange than in anything else. That has been admitted on numerous occasions by hon. Members on the Government side. Many of my hon. Friends claim that many people in the stock exchange ought to be in prison, but the stock exchange seems to have a new respectability nowadays. Not many of my constituents will queue up at the banks to invest £200 a month in stocks and shares. The looting of public assets cannot go on for ever. What will happen when the Government finally sell off British Gas and British Airways? The time will come when there will be nothing left to sell. Perhaps then they will put Buckingham palace up for sale or put the Palace of Westminster on lease.

The Goverment are building up problems for a future Labour Government to pick up. They have done nothing for the poor or for the pensioners. Of course the next Budget will be quiet different. It will contain the usual manipulation, priming the people to go forward with this dynamic Conservative Government; but, as soon as the election is over, if the Conservatives come back to power, they will resort to the type of economic policy that they are pursuing today.

I hope that my constituents and voters throughout the country will recognise this miserable Budget for the sham it is.

8.58 pm

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): I shall address my remarks to the Green Paper on the reform of personal taxation. Its publication marks an important step forward towards the equal treatment of women, and at the same time stresses the importance of marriage in the fabric of our society.

The Green Paper is long overdue, and I congratulate the Government on tackling the issues directly in a well-argued case. I believe that the first requirement of reform must be to place men and women on an absolutely equal basis. It should not matter whether they are married or single, or whether they work unpaid at home for the family, or in the office or factory for pay. A tax system based on the equal treatment of the individual is another step towards a society with those values.

The first step must be a move towards a single personal allowance, with the phasing out of the married man's allowance. Equality of treatment — and flexibility in family relationships — suggests that there should be no distinction between husband and wife. Thus, each individual would be responsible for his or her tax returns and correspondence with the Revenue, and would remain, if they so chose, absolutely independent for tax purposes.

These allowances would apply to all forms of income. The present bizarre treatment of married women in relation to savings income should be ended. That is an important point, and is by no means as peripheral as some would have us believe. It is a mistake to think that only the wealthy have savings income. Everyone with a building society account does. Likewise, as home ownership has moved towards 60 per cent. owner-occupation, as occupation and private pension provision increases, and as employee share schemes multiply, so the level of capital ownership in society rises.

The fact is that the spread of ownership of wealth is improving. A simple example illustrates that. Let us take a couple aged 50 with a mortgage that they have nearly paid off. They may well have savings invested, and the possibility of an occupational pension. Let us then say that the wife's parents die, having previously bought their council house, and that she inherits that house. Even following the appropriate tax, the wife will still have substantial capital to invest. As home ownership spreads, this will be more and more common, and the tax system should recognise it.

I strongly support the case that the Green Paper makes for transferable allowances. I do so because I believe that the current tax regime offers disincentives against marriage, and because equality of treatment between the sexes combined with transferrable allowances will remove that disincentive and alleviate the difficulties experienced by couples when the wife works unpaid in the home.

The Green Paper sets out the figures in paragraph 3.24. Under the present system, there is a sharp increase in the percentage of income paid in tax when a wife stops paid work—hardly an incentive to do so. Nor are some of the attitudes expressed an incentive. I have heard transferable allowances described as a "housewife's charter". Why should that be such a bad thing? There is no finer career for a woman than to be a housewife and a mother. Can there be an hon. Member here who does not recognise the maternal influence on his or her life, beliefs and values? Is it a complete coincidence that for 40 years we have discriminated against women who worked at home with their families, and have witnessed a simultaneous increase in violence and a lack of self-discipline in society?

Society needs to recognise the importance of the role of parents who choose that one should take on the continuous responsibility of caring personally for their families. The more that the state can do to support family units—or rather, the more unnecessary disincentives it can remove—the greater the stability of society as a whole. The consequences, not least in terms of Government expenditure, needed to perform a role historically taken by families themselves, are profound. It is right that the state should regard the family unit as the main building block of society, and marriage as the foundation which supports it. The tax system needs simplicity to be seen to be fair; it needs, too, to reflect society's values. It is, as the Green Paper suggests, invidious to treat one married couple differently from another.

It is argued by some that this form of transferable allowance scatters relief where it is not needed, to the detriment of those with young children in the poverty trap. The argument continues that it would be better to target assistance by, say, abolition of the married man's allowance, and using the money saved to fund a substantial increase in child benefit. But this implies that the state should give greater weight to the bearing and raising of children than it does to a wide range of other unpaid activity which people do, and upon which society also depends to a great extent. Those who argue for the child benefit route are arguing ultimately that the wide range of other voluntary activity should be replaced by state-run bodies, with the bureaucracy and uncertainty of long-term policy that that inevitably implies.

I have heard another argument against transferable allowances. If a spouse transfers allowances to his or her partner, on returning to work later they pay tax from the first penny earned. In some way this is said to be unfair. That is hard to understand. A person returning to work would presumably use his allowance, which would no longer be transferable. That is perfectly equitable. More money would be being earned and the family would be better off overall. The spouse who had previously received the transferred allowance might be paying more tax, but together the couple would be paying less tax, exactly as before, with the same overall relief.

It is worth remembering that it is not just the married woman now who will benefit. The single woman of today will be the married woman of tomorrow. Whether married or single, they should all have the opportunity to make their own choice without disincentives.

Reform of personal tax can do more than stress equality. It can act to encourage self-help, and the removal of high levels of dependence on the state, by use of reliefs and allowances. In the latter category, allowances for the blind, widow's bereavement and dependent relatives, are obvious cases. These are specific allowances, and the transferable allowance will complement them in less specific areas. One such case is that of a dependent relative who does not live under the same roof but whose care prevents a person from seeking paid work.

The other category of relief lies in the area where the state provides a minimum level of provision, but where by personal choice individuals can, throughout their lives, improve upon that. Pensions are the first example of this.

It is right that the state should recognise and make possible the widest possible take-up of occupational and private pension arrangements. Not to do so is to fail to see that Government expenditure has limits, that people prefer to make their own decisions about their lives, and that such relief will assist in mitigating the effects of poverty in old age. The key is Government as facilitator, and not as controller.

The same can be said of housing and mortgage interest tax relief. The ceiling limits are a matter for judgment, but the point of the relief is clear. Owner-occupation implies a personal responsibility for the quality of one's environment. Taking action on repairs is not hamstrung by bureaucracy, or restrictions on how, or when, or by whom that work is done. By providing this relief the Government give impetus to the development of the majority of the nation's housing stock being in the hands of those who have responsibility and direct personal interest in its maintenance. It is cheaper than direct intervention, and allows funds to be provided for the repair and additional provision of public housing.

There is one anomaly in the Green Paper that I would like to see ended. At present, mortgage tax relief is available on the basis of individual borrowers. This means that an unmarried couple receive tax relief on loans up to £60,000, but on marriage this figure falls to £30,000. That is hardly a situation favouring marriage. The answer is for the maximum of £30,000 to apply not to individuals but to the property itself.

These are my personal thoughts on the reform of taxation. I look forward to the earliest introduction of proposals in the Green Paper. The problems are complex, but what is needed is the political will to sort them out. It is outrageous that this discrimination against women still continues, and the sooner we correct it, the better.

9.9 pm

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): A few weeks ago in an interview with *CBI News*, the Prime Minister trailed what she thought should happen in the Budget. In her usual style she lectured the CBI membership through this newspaper. She said:

> "Let me tell you, a nurse on £140 a week pays £40 in tax and national insurance contributions, and I think she pays too much. So just you in the top quarter have some regard for those in the bottom half who are paying far too much tax."

But yesterday she allowed her Chancellor to introduce a Budget that produced tax reliefs for the better off and did

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very little at all to help the nurse on £140 a week. Indeed, if that nurse is living in residential accommodation provided by the hospital, she will probably find herself booted out and will be desperately looking for other accommodation locally.

This Budget does very little for the unemployed, still less for the low paid, and nothing at all for the 500,000 families that are caught in the poverty trap. The low paid on £5,000 a year will benefit to the tune of about £1·40 a week. The high paid on £20,000 a year will benefit to the tune of £4·96 a week. The highest paid on £50,000 a year will get an extra £11·36 a week. The Chancellor has wasted the money that he was going to spend on tax relief by reducing the standard rate rather than raising personal allowances.

If the Prime Minister really was concerned about the proportion of pay taken in tax and national insurance contributions—she linked the two in her remarks to the CBI—and if she was really concerned about families caught in the poverty trap, personal allowances would have been increased rather than the standard rate reduced.

The changes that have been introduced in this Budget do nothing to relieve the poverty trap for the 500,000 families that are now caught in it. The Low Pay Unit estimates that that figure has gone up fivefold since 1979, when it was 90,000. None of those families will get much out of this Budget.

If income tax and national insurance are taken together, people on five times average earnings do far better than people on average earnings or below. For example, a married couple with two children on five times average earnings will find that the proportion of their income taken in tax and national insurance contributions has gone down by 13 per cent. since 1979.

Even the little that has been gained by the very poorest families as a result of the tax changes in this year's Budget will soon be absorbed in the increase in petrol duties, which have been passed straight on to the customer, and the increase in cigarette duties. Of course, the Opposition do not quarrel with the latter.

There has been no help for the low paid and for families caught in the poverty trap. Those families could well have been helped by an increase in child benefit. We would like to have seen that benefit go up by £3 a week. That would have been of real assistance to low-paid families. Instead —despite what the Prime Minister said both in her "Panorama" interview and to *CBI News*—there have been further tax cuts to help the wealthy. There has been the abolition of CTT on lifetime transfers — so-called popular capitalism, which is still best called top people's capitalism, because, despite all the Government efforts to increase share ownership over the past seven years, only six out of every 100 people own shares.

According to *The Economist*, in 1985 even the sale of British Telecom, which almost doubled the number of individual shareholders then, did not prevent the personal sector as a whole from being a net seller of shares. As for putting away £200 a month in order to get the full tax benefits from this new scheme, few of my constituents have anything like that amount of money to save, and many of them must eke out an existence on £50 a week.

All these tax concessions, including the halving of stamp duty, total £155 million—three times the cost of the recently announced child benefit. No wonder the Government have given up calling themselves the party of the family. They have abandoned any concern for the family, especially the low-paid family.

It is going to be a difficult Finance Bill. The Opposition will resent a Bill that, for the seventh year in succession, will give tax cuts to the rich at the expense of the poor. We shall resent a Bill in which the Government side will be led by the Chief Secretary, a Minister we cannot trust. He has distorted statements made by my right hon. Friend the shadow Chancellor, other right hon. and hon. Friends and myself. He plainly believes that it is useful to employ the well-worn propaganda techniques which depend on the belief that if lies are repeated loud enough and often enough people will accept them. If this is the way in which he intends to behave, he must understand that the Opposition will treat him with the contempt he deserves and I am afraid that the ill feeling which he will have aroused in the Opposition will bode ill for our deliberations on the Finance Bill when it is eventually introduced.

Mr. MacGregor: I obviously heard what the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said this afternoon about this year and I understand that the figures which he is proposing are a good deal less than the £24 billion. That, of course, is a hypothetical situation, because he is not in a position to implement any Budget proposals in the coming year. The £24 billion to which the hon. Lady was referring is a figure for the Labour party if and when it ever gets into full swing with its programme. Quite simply, the remedy lies in the right hon. Gentleman's hands. If he wants to take items off the list, I shall be very happy to tick them off.

Dr. McDonald: Let me just give an example of the pure invention in which the Chief Secretary has indulged. Part of the £24 billion, the figure that he has dreamt up, purports to cost a number of education proposals described in *The Guardian* on 17 April 1985. I give the reference because hon. Members can then go away and read the article for themselves.

The Chief Secretary claims that the Labour party proposes to spend £235 million on teachers. No such figure appears in the article, nor can such a figure be substantiated from anything that appears in the article. On building and equipment, the figure £871 million appears in the Chief Secretary's cumulative list. Again, no such figure appears in the article, nor is there any figure by which it can be justified. The article is headed "Labour pledges £200 million boost for schools". The Chief Secretary's calculations increased that to over £1 billion. The article is there for all to read. The claims in the article are clearly made. I cite this as just one example of the fantasies in which the Chief Secretary indulges.

Mr. Hattersley: Withdraw.

Mr. MacGregor: I say quite simply to the hon. Lady that I am happy indeed to get the record right. What I want to establish is precisely what pledges the Opposition are putting forward. I shall be very happy to tick them off from the £24 billion because I believe that that is in the interest of all of us. If the right hon. Gentleman would like to write to me telling me what pledges I have got wrong, I will do the costing accurately.

Dr. McDonald: As I have just said to the Chief Secretary, I cited one example. I chose it because it concerned a specific pledge. It described the money that

we proposed to spend on education and the items on which we proposed to spend it. The Chief Secretary should have the decency at the very least to withdraw that allegation. His behaviour in the House is utterly disreputable.

We made specific pledges, which have been costed. I cited one, and the right hon. Gentleman did not even have the courtesy, never mind the decency, to withdraw his allegations. That was not the only example I could cite. The Chief Secretary well knows that, in the unemployment debate, I disputed his allegations about my letter to the Chancellor. On 17 February I wrote to the Chief Secretary repeating what I had said in that letter and asking him to withdraw what he had said. However, the right hon. Gentleman has not even done me the courtesy of replying to my letter of 17 February—more than a month ago.

If that is the type of behaviour that we get from the Chief Secretary, obviously we cannot trust him. That is why I referred to the manner in which the Finance Bill debates might be conducted. We cannot deal with a person who distorts the statements we make during our speeches and produces fantasy figures.

Of course we know why the fantasy figure of £24 billion was produced—it was to cover up the fact that, in the past seven years, unemployment has already cost this country more than £24 billion. The costs in terms of lost output must be immense. No wonder the Chief Secretary wants to distract attention from the Government's record. The fact that he has to resort to these methods shows how utterly disreputable his behaviour is.

The fact that the right hon. Gentleman has not at least apologised for the item to which I referred shows how discourteous and how lacking in courage he is—never mind his failure to acknowledge, reply to or withdraw his allegations about my statements. The Chief Secretary's behaviour is amazing. It shows the Government's moral and intellectual bankruptcy. They have no direction in their economic policy. Faced with falling oil prices, they do not know what to do to put the economy back on the right course. Such decisions as they do make on those issues are entirely wrong. I should gladly sit down at any point if the Chief Secretary has the decency or courage to apologise, but I do not think that he has those qualities.

I should like to give an example of the mistakes that the Government have made in the Budget. Petrol duties have increased more than the rate of inflation. Obviously that was a mistake. It was clear that the increase would be immediately passed on to the consumer. Shell could not act quickly enough to do that, despite the Chancellor's plea, and, this morning, BP announced that it would do exactly the same thing.

What is important is not just the fact that these prices are passed on immediately to the consumer and hit the consumer's pocket but the fact that, despite what the Government say about the value to the economy of falling oil prices, unless the fall in crude oil prices is fully passed on to industrial and domestic consumers, our economy cannot possibly benefit from lower prices to the extent that it should. Our economy will suffer in terms of inflation — although to a lesser extent — unemployment and growth.

The failure to pass on the full benefit of the 50 per cent. drop in crude oil prices is immensely damaging to the economy. The Chancellor knew that. He was warned that that would happen. He was warned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and by several of my hon. Friends about the dangers of increasing such taxation. He was warned that, if he allowed the oil companies to profiteer in that way, it would damage the economy. That is what will happen. It is possible to demonstrate that, even using an optimistic economic model such as the London Business School model. That shows clearly that if oil prices do not drop for industrial and domestic consumers, we will not get the fall in unemployment and the growth which might otherwise occur.

Mr. Higgins: If the hon. Lady thinks that the taxation increase will be passed on entirely, does it follow from that that she thinks that the elasticity of demand for petrol is zero?

Dr. McDonald: Of course it does not mean that. By applying a model to such calculations we see clearly that we do not get the benefits for unemployment and for growth that we might otherwise get. Of course, that is even more damaging for us because some of our main competitors, such as Germany, are oil importers and get far more benefit from lower oil prices. That makes it even more difficult for us to compete with them, and to overcome the problems already faced by our manufacturing industry.

In all the Budget debates the effect of falling oil prices on the balance of payments has been overlooked. Plainly, the Chancellor would rather not think about that. Again the LBS model suggests that about £2·5 billion will be knocked off the balance of payments this year. That figure could increase in subsequent years because of the fall in oil prices. To make up the gap in the balance of payments, service industries would have to grow by 10 per cent. and manufacturing exports by 4 per cent.

Service industries are unlikely to meet the growth necessary to fill that gap because, although growing, they have a falling share of the world market. As for manufacturing industry, our share of the world export trade in manufactured goods was just over 9 per cent. in 1979. Despite the constant repetition by the Chancellor that the value of our exports is at record level and so on, the truth is that by 1985 our manufactured exports had fallen to 7·8 per cent. of world trade.

In a harshly competitive world, when others benefit more from falling oil prices than we do, it will be very difficult to make up through manufacturing industry the gap left by declining oil prices in our balance of payments. Neither investment in manufacturing industry nor manufacturing output has reached the 1979 level. Today the *Financial Times* reported:

"The pace of growth of Britain's manufacturing output appears to have slowed and the upward trend of overall industrial production has also weakened in recent months."

So output is growing much more sluggishly than it did in the past. The Budget does nothing to remedy that. Investment will not go into manufacturing industry as a result of the Budget. There is no public spending in the Budget that would give a boost to the construction industry or to any other of our basic industries.

I listened to the Chancellor's interview on the "Today" programme this morning and heard him, once again, being extremely dismissive about the importance of investment in manufacturing industry. He said that it is not just a matter of going out to buy a new machine or piece of equipment. He does not understand manufacturing industry. His training and experience have been in finance and financial journalism. He neither understands, cares

[Dr. McDonald]

about, nor even likes manufacturing industry. He makes no attempt to understand industry and its needs. Nor does he understand the importance of investment.

No, it is not just a matter of buying a new piece of machinery; it is now a matter of applying new technology and high technology to industry. Unless we adopt and apply techniques such as computer integrated management to our industry, we shall be unable to compete with American and German industries. That is the kind of investment that is essential, yet the Chancellor does not even begin to understand that. Such investment is important. Without it, we fall behind.

The Chancellor and the Treasury rely far too much on the importance of price competitiveness for exports. Of course that is important. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friends are saying loudly behind me, with the connivance of Conservative Members, that we see that the Liberals and Social Democrats are not here to say anything. It appears that Banquo—my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)—has also turned up at the feast to tell us of the absence of Social Democratic and Liberal parties. It is not surprising that they are not here because they have nothing relevant to say about the needs of our economy and our manufacturing industry.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: To be fair, only nine hon. Members who support the Government are present at the moment.

Dr. McDonald: After gathering so many Tory Members at the last election, it is unfortunate that not many are here to hear the second to last Budget before the next election.

The Budget is immensely disappointing and it does nothing for manufacturing industry or exports, nothing to make up the gap in the balance of payments, nothing for the poor and nothing for the unemployed. Despite the Prime Minister's promise, there are only yet more tax cuts for the rich.

9.33 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Moore): We have had a wide-ranging debate. We have had contributions on the overall strategic judgment and on all aspects of the economy. There have been detailed speeches on topics ranging from the Health Service to the North sea to Scotland.

I share the views of the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) about the extraordinary absence throughout the major part of our proceedings of the parties which are supposed to represent what they regard as part of the Opposition. The hon. Lady was right to draw attention to that. I had assumed that the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) would be present for the closing speeches. I had wanted to make some references to his speech, but I had better restrict myself to his description of my right hon. Friend's Budget as a pudding that had some good plums but no theme. He was reminding us of a quotation by the late Sir Winston Churchill. I find the concept of a pudding with no theme more fitting to the policies of the alliance than the serious decision-making process in which he once participated, when he was in government. Its absence from the conclusion of the second day of the Budget debate shows the lack of seriousness with which the alliance views the House of Commons.

I have now a slightly technical matter that concerns arrangements for bringing Budget changes into operation, which affect income tax and corporation tax. Every year, some changes have to take effect more or less immediately. For those which work to the taxpayers' advantage, the normal rule is that they take effect on or after Budget day, but for those changes that work the other way—by imposing or increasing tax—the practice has been to apply the changes after Budget day. In most cases, this works well enough, but there may be occasions when some people engage in forestalling, which could be costly to the Exchequer, by doing business very quickly on Budget night. To allow this would be neither fair nor sensible, and it may be necessary in future to make changes effective from the start of Budget day. I thought it right to draw the attention of the House to this change, which may be used in a future Budget.

The Budget continues the process of radical reform started by my right hon. Friend's predecessor as Chancellor of the Exchequer, my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, and welcomed by my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon). It completes the corporation tax reform package of 1984, and following this, the main corporation rate will be 35 per cent., for those paying mainstream corporation tax and for small companies, 29 per cent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington, and my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) in a thoughtful and distinguished speech, drew the attention of the House to the Green Paper on the reform of personal taxation which has clearly been associated with the Budget. I know that hon. Members may not have had time to read the Green Paper, but it is an important contribution to the next stage of the reform of the taxation system. I trust that the House will not mind if, as there have been references to it, I take a little time to discuss certain aspects of the Green Paper. General and genuine consultation and a full debate outside and inside the House on this Green Paper will be beneficial.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House find the present system quite unacceptable. It discriminates against women in marriage, denying them independence and privacy, and placing tax penalties on marriage, which must be changed. The question is to what kind of independent taxation it should be changed, and two basic kinds are generally argued for. There is what might be called independent taxation, with transferable allowances, which is the argument outlined in the Green Paper, and there is the argument for mandatory separate taxation—MST. I shall consider both briefly, as they are germane to the overall Budget debate.

I wish to show why we see transferable allowances as clearly superior. The Green Paper goes into this in some detail. First, they recognise the key role and importance of marriage. Secondly, they remove all discriminatory features from the present system. Thirdly, they offer independence and privacy for all and—this is crucial—the flexibility of transferability as well. This is particularly effective in recognising the life cycle of couples in marriage and their changing needs. For almost all couples one partner is dependent upon the other at some time—

often at a time of greatest need, for example the birth of the first child, or when a wife may give up her job when her husband's job forces him to move.

Fourthly, transferable allowances recognise that an allowance is not much use without an income to set it against. There have been several criticisms of these proposals, with two basic criticisms. One is that the new system will be complicated. I am not sure that I fully accept that because——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: What has this to do with the Budget?

Mr. Moore: This has a great deal to do with it. I have sat throughout the debate, and I shall endeavour to make my own speech on a rather critical part of the overall tax system.

The first criticism is that they were complicated. Anybody who looks through our tax system could, when he looks at it with some care, regard the already existing set of allowances as very complicated. I do not think that they could be more complicated. Secondly, it is suggested that operationally the new system would be complicated. Provided that the proper mechanical, computerised system is put in, the additional flexibility will create operational difficulties and extra operational work for the Revenue. The staff consequences of that are covered in the Green Paper. However, I do not think that they will be any more complicated for the customers of the system — the general public. In fact, I think that they will be more simple.

The second main criticism which genuinely puzzles me is that the proposals might be a disincentive to women to go out to work. My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne discussed that in part of her speech. I find that very difficult to understand. The disincentive argument rests on a strange view of British men. Will they really object to family income going up if it means their own take-home pay goes down? In most cases the couple would be going back to the situation before the wife gave up work.

Dr. McDonald *rose*——

Mr. Moore: I should like to continue, because I am genuinely trying to contribute to what I hope is a serious debate on this issue.

As I said, in some cases the couple would be going back to the situation before the wife gave up work—in other words, one single allowance each. It is the preference for mandatory separate taxation that I cannot understand. In practical terms, mandatory separate taxation and transferable allowances both give each partner a single allowance. However, mandatory separate taxation will not allow the husband to use the allowance when the wife is not in paid work. Therefore, the only difference is that the husband cannot lose an advantage which he never had in the first place. Therefore, it is not obviously a superior system. My difficulty is that this is a consultation debate and we will not have the opportunity in Committee to discuss what is obviously an important issue. It is critical to note that the liberal nation in western Europe which has the highest percentage of married women in work is Denmark, with transferable allowances. I think that we have to consider that carefully.

I should like to look seriously at mandatory separate taxation. [*Interruption.*] It would be helpful if I could continue without sedentary interruptions. Some of us have listened very patiently to the debate throughout the whole evening on areas surrounding all aspects of the Budget.

The problem we have when looking at mandatory separate taxation is that in principle it seeks to ignore marriage. It does not think through the practical consequences. Perhaps—this is a legitimate point which I see the strength of — it is because very different schools are espousing this set of suggestions. I see arguments in logic for all of those schools. There is the tax theology school which will want to see people taxed as individuals.

Mr. Bermingham: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not an abuse of the House for a Minister not to reply to a debate and the many speeches made by hon. Members on both sides of the House, but to use it to raise what is clearly a Committee point?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Financial Secretary has been speaking for about seven minutes. I think that this may be a preamble. He has plenty of time to answer the debate.

Mr. Moore: It is more than a preamble; it is a fundamental part of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's speech and a critical part of some of the Budget announcements. I immensely resent somebody who has spent little time in the Chamber tonight suggesting that I am not answering the debate.

As I was saying, there are three different schools which suggest that we should espouse mandatory separate taxation. Those who believe in tax theology would want to see people taxed as individuals, irrespective of their circumstances or responsibility. The social theology school would not want to take any account of marriage as distinct from other relationships in tax or social policy. Then there are what might be called welfare theologists, who believe that there is a pot of gold in the married allowance and want it directed to those most in need rather than, as they see it, to all one-earner couples. The practical consequences are critical for millions of our fellow citizens in the debate that we should be having on the issue. Those theologists have not thought through the practical consequences, which I want to draw to the attention of the House. Those consequences flow from the logic of a tax system ignoring marriage.

The first, I imagine, is the need to abolish married women's retirement pension and widow's benefits. The second is the setting up of an anti-avoidance system, discriminating specifically against marriage, to ensure that under MST in one-earner families, the transfer of income between couples, via covenanting, trusts and other settlements could not occur. [*Interruption.*] I know that some hon. Members were not present to hear the excellent speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne on that subject, but I was.

Within the capital taxes system, there would, of course, be no spouse exemption. We would have to establish precisely, in a marriage, separate taxable interests in the assets of the marriage so that any transfers could be properly taxed. For example, a widow would face intolerable hardship when she would have to pay tax on her inheritance of the family home.

We could examine that in great detail, and I shall not go into much more, but let us consider the couple who would lose from MST not recognising marriage, who benefit under the present system, or who could benefit

[Mr. Moore]

under transferable allowances. Hon. Members should note well that, where the wife does not go out to paid work, two thirds of those of working age look after children. Presumably there would be a need to ensure that they were at least no worse off. Of the remaining one third, many look after dependent relatives, are themselves unable to work, through illness or disablement, or are of an age when it would be difficult to return to the labour market. It seems absurd to allow them to suffer because of a refusal to recognise marriage and its responsibilities in the tax system.

What about the 340,000 wives who support their husbands who are ill or unable to find work? Do they suffer because of a rigid adherence to an inflexible form of mandatory separate taxation? What about families where the husband or wife has moved to find work or transferred to an area of high unemployment—the high unemployment that was discussed legitimately earlier in the debate? What happens if one spouse simply cannot find a job? Are those families to suffer a further blow than the loss of one income because there is to be no transferability of allowances?

What about the elderly? Over two thirds of couples drawing married age allowances are one-earner couples. They would lose sharply through MST and, clearly, would need to be compensated.

The reality is that only about 10 per cent. of all wives of working age, who are not in paid employment, and who might—I stress "might"—be in a position to seek work, may benefit "indiscriminately", as is said, from transferable allowances.

I should like to conclude this important section. It is vital. I trust that hon. Members will look at it with care because it is a serious issue. Transferable allowances offer the opportunity for privacy and independence for all married women, but recognise in a fair and flexible way the fact that at different times and for different reasons, one partner in a marriage supports the other. Transferable allowances let that person keep more of his earnings. MST, though offering independent taxation and privacy, would be inflexible, so it would fail to recognise marriage. It is that absurdity in practice that makes it unsurprising that no other country has a tax system that fails to recognise marriage or proposes to adopt one.

The second major theme of the debate arose when many of my right hon. and hon. Friends and Opposition Members tried to understand the ways in which the Chancellor, in his Budget, sought to create an enterprise culture. As my right hon. friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) rightly said, in what I thought was a wise analysis of the problem of long-term unemployment, it is from enterprise that lasting jobs will come.

The Budget has three basic interlocking themes in regard to ownership. First, it seeks to encourage ownership at the place of work. I think that there is some amity across the House on that. There is some support—I hope that there will be in Committee—for the changes that the Budget foreshadows in employee share ownership. In past years the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) has raised many points about constraints and I am sure that hon. Members on both sides will be delighted at the extension of employee share ownership in future.

The hon. Member for Hodge Hill will not mind me mentioning the name of Paul Derrick in relation to industrial co-operatives. I am sure that the significant advance in ownership opportunities and benefits will be welcomed in Committee. Yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer spent considerable time on the encouragement of ownership of the place of work and profit sharing. My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) and the right hon. Member for Hillhead, who is absent, welcomed that, and we look forward to detailed consultations on that.

Secondly, the Budget seeks to encourage ownership of equities in general. The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell), prior to a detailed lengthy speech, to which I listened with considerable care and enjoyment, with 33 minutes spent legitimately on the subject that he regards with the importance that I place on the Green Paper and particular aspects of tax reform, asked from a sedentary position why we should encourage the ownership of equity when my hon. friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) was arguing for it. The reason is that we can expect to create the climate in which entrepreneural activity can flourish through an understanding of the risk and rewards of ownership. I am sure that that was my hon. Friend's argument when he sought the extension of ownership.

I was delighted by the way in which my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing, and my hon. Friends, the Members for Darlington, for Windsor and Maidenhead, for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) and for Winchester (Mr. Browne) were excited at the Chancellor's commitment to the new personal equity plan. It is a major and significant extension of what may be called popular capitalism — an extension beyond the ownership of homes and the ways in which people seek legitimately to own parts of their place of work to ownership of the wider equity market.

I know that my hon. Friends welcome our encouragement of people to understand ownership and the risk-reward relationship. It will be regarded in future as one of the single most significant movements forward. I shall look with interest at the remarks of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who dismissed the plan, and of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) who was worried about the implications for bear markets and who saw a time bomb. I am sure that they will eat their words and worries as they did with the concept of council house sales. Their reaction is precisely the same. They simply cannot understand the nature of ownership and the way in which it creates genuine benefits, not only for individuals and their families, but for the wider community. I was delighted at the reaction of all of my hon. Friends to that significant part of the Budget.

The third main aim of the Budget in the encouragement of the enterprise culture is to encourage enterprise by supporting and rewarding risk taking. My hon. Friends the Members for Darlington, for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) and for Windsor and Maidenhead rightly recognised the role of the enterprise allowance scheme, and welcomed its extension to this area. Obviously, I look forward to their further support of that. My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester, who had to apologise to the House for his absence during the replies, particularly welcomed the extension to three years and the reduction in the premium on the loan guarantee scheme from 5 per

cent. to 2·5 per cent. That has received a relatively wide welcome. I am delighted to receive the support of the hon. Member for Workington.

My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester, my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing and my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington greatly welcomed the changes and extensions — as did some Opposition Members, including the Leader of the Opposition—of the business expansion scheme. Hon. Members have not yet had an opportunity to read the very large but very good Peat Marwick report, but when they have had an opportunity to do so they will see that the scheme has been a considerable success. The final picture for 1983-84 shows an investment of £105 million in 715 companies.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Mostly in the south.

Mr. Moore: I shall turn to that point in a moment. Last year the hon. Member for Workington quite legitimately referred in Committee to the nature of the geographic spread. I am sure that he will again legitimately raise that point. The preliminary figures for 1984-85 show an investment of £135 million in 688 companies. The final figure will be higher than that.

Hon. Members will be interested to note that the Peat Marwick study shows that 72 per cent. of the companies raising finance are under five years old, that 54 per cent. of them raised £50,000, or less, that 69 per cent. raised £100,000 or less, and that 42 per cent. of the companies were engaged in manufacturing. Hon. Members might wish that percentage to be higher. I understand that wish, but 42 per cent. is not quite so insignificant a percentage as many people thought it would be. The Budget proposals intend to build on that success. The Government hope to try to promote a better focus on this area of high risk investment.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said yesterday that we shall seek to extend indefinitely the life of the scheme. We shall exempt from capital gains tax gains on shares qualifying for business expansion scheme relief in order to encourage high risk investment. We shall extend the scheme to ship chartering companies to help to promote high risk investment in the United Kingdom shipping industry. This proposal has received a general welcome from all sides of the House. We are also seeking to tighten the controls so as to restrict the scheme to high risk investment. We shall seek to exclude investment in companies that have substantial property backing or those that carry on the trade of holding investment goods—for example, fine wines and antiques. We shall take power, by statutory instrument, to make further changes in the coverage of the scheme.

The Budget contains changes in stamp duty. My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury will seek to deal with those changes tomorrow evening, if he catches your eye, Mr. Speaker.

Despite the dramatic and unprecedented fall in world oil prices, the Government's objectives remain unchanged. They have two objectives: the conquest of inflation and the creation of an enterprise culture. Their policies also remain unchanged. They are sound money and free markets. They provide the only route to more jobs and to lasting jobs. The Government's adherence to firm monetary and fiscal policies has enabled the economy to weather both the coal strike and the fall in the price of oil — two more than significant events in the last two years. Despite that, the Government have maintained inflation on a downward trend, with steady and balanced growth, a current account surplus and rising—I stress rising—employment.

The high level of unemployment remains, as my right hon. Friend recognised yesterday, a major problem, although the prospects are better now than they have been for some years. The responsibility for a reduction in unemployment, as my right hon. Friend stressed yesterday, lies primarily with management, through improved industrial and economic performance and through a lower rate of pay settlements. We have to recognise that the excessive growth in unit labour costs is the Achilles heel of the British economy.

The Government continue to pursue an economic policy that remains within the framework of the medium-term financial strategy. It is designed steadily to reduce growth of total spending power in the economy at a pace that will gradually squeeze inflation out of the system while leaving adequate room for sustained growth in real output. The central role of monetary policy in influencing growth of money GDP through variations in short-term interest rates remains essentially unchanged. The precise mix, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said yesterday, is not sacrosanct; monetary policy must always be supported by low public sector borrowing.

Given the dramatic fall in the price of oil, with consequences for North sea tax revenues and the need to maintain a prudent fiscal policy, the 1986 Budget updates the medium-term financial strategy to 1989-90——

Debate adjourned—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Petition

Social Security Reform

10 pm

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): I wish to present a petition organised by the Cumbernauld and district campaign against benefit cuts, which obtained 9,500 signatures in opposition to the Social Security Bill. The Bill is based on the Government's White Paper on the reform of social security. The first signatory to this massive petition is the provost of Cumbernauld and Kilsyth, district provost James Pollock, JP. The signatures in the petition represent 21 per cent. of the electorate in my constituency and therefore reflect the weight of public opinion against the Government's objectives.

The Social Security Bill does not reform social security. It is merely a means of making the poor even poorer and the needy more needy. The Bill is bad news for mothers, for families with children and for those with occupational pensions. It holds nothing for every unemployed householder and every ratepayer on a low income. My constituents have concluded that the Government's proposals should be rejected. They are bad for them and bad for the nation as a whole. Therefore, the Bill should not receive the approval of the House.

The petition concludes:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will not pass legislation arising out of the reform of social security White Paper.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

I beg leave to present the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Unemployment (Wentworth)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

10.2 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The average rate of unemployment throughout the United Kingdom is 13·8 per cent., which is very high. That means that one person in seven throughout the country in the age groups which should be economically active are unemployed.

Unemployment in my constituency is dreadfully severe. The official figure in the travel-to-work area is 23·1 per cent., but that does not present an accurate picture. Officially, almost one person in four in my constituency is unemployed; but in reality the position is much worse as many of the unemployed are not included in the official statistics. Many ladies who leave jobs are not registered and many men who are below retirement age, often far below it, are excluded, as are all those on the youth and community programmes, which, though welcome, are only palliatives.

Enforced inactivity is bad enough for anyone, but on the scale that we are now experiencing it corrodes our community. It becomes a grave matter when it seems an inescapable prospect for young people. In my constituency the dreadful inevitability of unemployment must command attention, for we neither provide work for our youngsters nor sufficient opportunities for meaningful leisure.

Of the 1985 school leavers, only 14·4 per cent. have found normal employment after almost one year of ending their full-time education, and 2,319 are either unemployed or on Government schemes, which seem merely to be a deferment of unemployment. Some teenagers seem to have lost so much hope that they tend to believe that retirement begins when the youth training scheme is completed.

Of the 1984 school leavers, only 42 per cent. are economically active. All that those youngsters see is a dreadful pattern of decline in employment with no scope for ambition, interest, responsibility or challenge lying ahead of them.

Since 1981, the area that I represent has lost about 4,000 jobs in mining, over 2,500 in steel and another 2,000 to 2,500 in manufacturing industry generally, and a net loss of about 1,000 jobs in the service sector.

Almost 25 per cent. of our officially unemployed are under 20 years of age; 40 per cent. are aged between 20 and 29; and 40 per cent. of our unemployed have been without work for over a year. That is a quite horrific picture. What causes me the greatest anxiety is that some of us perceived years ago that difficulty would come, although we never believed that acceleration in the decline could have taken place at the pace we have experienced in the last four or five years.

As a young councillor I recall rejecting the view that new industry should not come to our area because it would tempt men away from the coal industry where wages were then not at all competitive. Our area was deemed to be too important as a coal producer for work to be undertaken to secure economic diversification. I hope the Minister fully understands what I am saying—that the nation has an obligation to those entrapped in the present position.

I live in the middle of South Yorkshire which is being abolished as a legal unit in 12 days' time. I live 200 yards from the house in which I was born in that mining

community where once most men worked in or in jobs related to the coal mining industry. In the not too distant past many boys went to the pits at which their fathers and uncles worked and many were trained in skills that went on to sustain small businesses elsewhere. What do we see now? The youngest man in the South Yorkshire coal industry is nearly 20 years of age. There has been no training and no recruitment for an unconscionably long time. That is bound to damage our local economy.

As I said, 14·4 per cent. of last year's school leavers have a job. The prospect of bitterness is inevitable. In Brampton Bailow, in which lay Cortonwood colliery before the miners' strike, there was high unemployment. Some 57 per cent. of the men there worked for the National Coal Board. In January 1984 those men were assured that their pit had five year's life. Five weeks later they were told it should shut in five weeks, and the strike began. It increasingly looks as it it was intended to begin. That pit is now closed. Some of the men have been transferred and others have taken the pension or payment available and retired. Altogether, we have undergone a devastating community experience.

It is not only in Brampton, because in the Bramley and Wickersley ward at the other end of the constituency 1,091 people have lost their jobs. In Thrybergh and Dalton 1,377 jobs have gone. In parts of Dalton—for example, in Dalton Brook—I cannot find a single teenager in normal employment. In Rawmarsh 1,816 jobs have gone and in Wath and Swinton the figure is 2,560. Altogether there are 6,766 local claimants of unemployment benefit. As I have said, over 40 per cent. of our unemployed have been without work for over a year, and they are not included in that number.

What is also galling is that our other local major industry, steel, has suffered terribly, despite the long term and determined commitment to change and to success shown by workers and management over a long period. In the 1960s there was major change to adapt to modern requirements, and that continued in the 1970s when we were immensely proud of the enormous success of the new Thrybergh bar mill, the holder of world records and an example of co-operation and wise investment. In that case, we demonstrated what good investment and decent industrial relations policies could achieve. Then came the dreadful decline since 1979 when the rest of the Common Market steel industry looked after itself and we rushed headlong down the contraction route. Thousands of steel jobs were lost in south Yorkshire. When our manufacturing and engineering industries recover, as one day they must, if we are not careful the resulting orders will have to be met elsewhere whilst our own people languish.

One cause for anxiety is that for the last two or three years there has been insufficient investment in steel whilst those in power have indulged in the obsessive game of furtive negotiations for privatisation. Those negotiations drag on for years and leave us with increasing anxiety. Despite that, the Minister may have noted the motion that I tabled yesterday congratulating the Aldwarke works on breaking its ninth record this year. It is to be hoped that the potential achievement that demonstrates will justify an early decision, which should have been made by now, to provide Aldwarke with the continuous casting facility that it needs.

But we cannot look to coal or steel to meet all our employment needs. Economic diversification is essential. The dominating analysis of the early 1970s does not suffice. Then the Department of Trade and Industry believed that in our county economic need could be met from within. Plainly the need is so immense that that view will not do. My local authority recognises that. I know that it is the Government's view that some local authorities do not seem to be attractive to outside interests, but the Minister cannot say that about the Rotherham metropolitan borough, which is a prudent and respected authority which is desperately eager to develop the local economy. However, it has been hit by the ravaging effects of central policy and a loss of revenue from industrial sources, as well as by the huge cuts in central Government support for local authorities.

Despite our enormous efforts to keep down local spending, the Government have cut the grant again this year, disregarded the reduced rate income, and forced the council to increase the rates by a substantial amount. The council will not be rate capped. We cannot afford it. But our desperate prospects will not be helped by this result from the Government's utterly unhelpful approach. Rotherham has lost scores of millions of pounds in central revenue since 1979, and has reduced the number of jobs as a result.

Our housing programme, including the provision of private improvment grants, has been slashed, yet serious needs continue to exist. That issue requires urgent consideration, and the Government should not now force the council to curtail the use of capital receipts. Today moneys should be spent on investment in areas such as housing, as jobs are desperately needed, but next year the council is to be allowed to spend only £6,030,000 on all of its housing investment, which is enough to buy 15 houses like the one that the Prime Minister has recently purchased, or a dozen of the two-bedroomed flats that are on sale one mile from the Chamber.

Our needs are glaringly obvious, and that is perceived by bodies throughout our society. Our churches are deeply anxious, and some of them are heavily involved in community programmes which are an acceptable palliative. Our trades council is concerned. Only last Saturday I attended a meeting in Rotherham that was devoted to analysing the need and to pointing to the solutions to our economic problems. There is wide and substantial local involvement in the treatement of the symptoms, but we are now powerless to deal with the problems. That is for the Government to do, but yesterday's Budget was an almost frivolous response to our desperate need.

Perhaps the Minister will agree to some proposals. We need security for such mining as we have left in the constituency. I hope that there can be something of a guarantee for the Manvers complex and for continued investment there, and for Silverwood colliery, which recently broke yet another European record. We need recruitment and training again in the mining industry.

Moreover, we need further investment and the provision of continuous casting at Aldwarke, as our basic industries must not be allowed to shrink any further. We also need an immediate and substantial expansion of our environmental reclamation programme to ensure that the Victorian legacy is transformed more swiftly than is currently planned. The area must be made more attractive for development. Perhaps that will lead to some interest

[Mr. Peter Hardy]

among the financial institutions of the City, which seem to give more priority to overseas investment than to the safeguarding of sanity in our provinces.

We need full and proper recognition from the Government that our communities merit higher priority and that we are not going to see the creation of mini Northern Irelands and no-go areas in the 21st century. In our area we have seen a unity of purpose. The local council, the parish council, the trades council, the chamber of commerce and the churches all perceive the needs and they are working together in a co-operative approach. I am sure that the Minister will be impressed by the co-operation between the chamber of commerce and Rotherham council which is demonstrated in the splendid work of the Rotherham enterprise agency, which could be given greater resources. We have that unity and adversity, and it is adversity.

Some time ago I urged the Prime Minister to arrange a multidepartmental approach, and a ministerial conference in Rotherham, to show that there was a proper awareness of our position. Despite the fact that the Prime Minister recognised that we were to lose 2,800 mining jobs, she declined to assist. That disdain for that part of the country is quite intolerable. It is disdain for one of the major casualties of the divisive economic approach which besets our nation.

We need a more sensitive response to our plight than was shown last year when I went to the DTI to ask for assistance for a warehousing project. That was denied on the grounds that it would not create either local or national benefit. The Minister will understand that I question the sanity of those who gave that advice. The project proceeded, and although it did so on a smaller scale than we had hoped, it has remained the largest single job creator for some years in my constituency, yet it provided fewer than 100 jobs.

It is fashionable for the Government to say that Opposition Members are not co-operative in seeking to promote development. That is not true in the Rotherham area. My colleagues and I have made a number of proposals. In the last 12 months I have suggested reasonable schemes to promote timber growing and timber use, clock making, and the restoration of the Rockingham pottery, which made internationally famous porcelain before 1841 and which could be assisted with EEC grants.

We welcome the creation of NCB (Enterprise). Every week I look at the rapid progress of the scheme at Wath upon Dearne, where I know the excellent people involved. It is very welcome, but it is still only scratching the surface. That scheme may actually not provide as many jobs as we are going to lose, or already have lost, at Wentworth Woodhouse, the largest stately home in Britain. Rotherham borough council is responsible for that. Now that Sheffield polytechnic is moving out—perhaps as a result of Government policy—Rotherham will be left with an enormous liability and Rotherham council has no resources to seek alternative use, which is necessary. I asked the Government to assist with the further use of that tremendous asset. Unfortunately, assistance was refused, as a result of which the cost will continue to be incurred, and the enormous potential for the physical and recreational provision that exists is likely to be lost.

The Minister will no doubt mention our enterprise zone. Unfortunately, it is not filling with wealth creation. We have seen the development of imaginative ideas of enormous scale in shopping and entertainment complexes. I only hope that local disposable incomes will be capable of sustaining such development. I believe wealth must also be created, but we have seen our potential for future creation rejected.

This is not merely a question of economic statistics. We are talking about the future stability of our society. In my area, in the not too distant past, people did not need to lock their doors. In the last few months, more than 200 pensioners living within 1½ miles of my home have had coal stolen from their homes.

That is a shocking indictment of the change that the Government have inflicted on south Yorkshire, for today we have more magistrates than we had criminals a quarter of a century ago. I hope that the Minister will respond to these pleas, recognise the harsh reality we face and try to ensure that we will no longer take only one step forward for every 20 that we are forced to retreat.

10.19 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Ian Lang): I very much appreciate the concern of the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) about unemployment in his constituency, and the seriousness with which he put his case. I shall try to answer as many of his points as I can, and I welcome the opportunity to do so. The hon. Gentleman is aware that unemployment, particularly serious though it is in his constituency, is not just of local or even national concern, but is an international problem.

The Government are continually searching for ways which will help real jobs to be created, and despite the unacceptably high national unemployment rate, the number of jobs has been rising since March 1983, and by 220,000 in the year to September 1985. The number of employees in service industries is at a record level, and the rate of decline in the number of manufacturing employees has eased considerably since 1983. The CBI has forecast 460,000 new jobs over the next two years, so new jobs are being created.

There are, therefore, real grounds for optimism on the national scene. I know that this is of no immediate comfort to those in areas of particularly high employment. The rate for the Rotherham and Mexborough travel-to-work area—where the hon. Gentleman's constituency is located—is too high. The area suffers from the all too familiar problem—particularly in various parts of the north of England—of traditional industries such as mining and steel in historic decline, having to adjust, often painfully, to new world market conditions.

That sort of change has happened in the past and will happen again in the future, but I recognise that the transition period is always very difficult. There have recently been a number of closures and redundancies in the area, as the hon. Gentleman mentioned. He referred to his appeal to the Government for a co-ordinated ministerial approach to the problems of the area. He might like to know that I was in Sheffield very recently, where I visited the newly established and encouraging job club in Woodhouse. In addition, the Secretary of State was in Huddersfield, Wakefield and York only last week, and my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr.

Trippier) will be in Doncaster shortly. Therefore, our Department is not unfamiliar with south Yorkshire's problems.

Not least among the companies declaring redundancies in recent years has been British Steel. The Government have been concerned to help to ensure a continued United Kingdom presence in the engineering steels sector and have supported the setting up of a new company — United Engineering Steels — in a joint venture between the BSC and GKN to enable Britain to compete internationally, thereby safeguarding the longer-term job security of those who work in this sector. The BSC steel plant in the Rotherham area will represent an important part of the businesses going into the new company. Therefore, although redundancies have been announced recently, I am optimistic about the future of the new company.

I have seen the early-day motion tabled by the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) relating to the achievements of the Aldwarke steel works in breaking production records. I gladly join the hon. Gentleman in congratulating the works on the nine new records that it has established this year.

The Government have agreed the provision of funds to the BSC to subscribe £55 million for preference shares and loan stock to United Engineering Steels — the new company to be formed under Phoenix 2 — on the understanding that the new company will undertake further investment, particularly in continuous casting. The timing and location of such investments will rightly be a matter for the board of United Engineering Steels.

Another industry in which there has been major redundancies, which have hit south Yorkshire as much as anywhere, has been the coal industry. But keeping open uneconomic pits is no answer to unemployment, and the size of the current investment programme in south Yorkshire is a measure of the commitment, both by the Government and the NCB, to the future of the industry. The restructuring that has been entirely necessary has been achieved by the NCB without a single forced redundancy. The NCB maintains its policy of offering a job to any man who wishes to remain in the industry.

The NCB has also demonstrated its concern for the future of the coal mining communities most affected by pit closures by setting up NCB (Enterprise). At the end of January, this company had committed £1·8 million to aid new industry in Yorkshire, creating more than 900 job opportunities. A further £6·5 million of investment has been attracted from other sources, and this is very encouraging. For the first time we have an organisation specifically to provide loans for the creation of jobs in coal mining areas, and there is no shortage of funds available for all those coming forward with suitable proposals. I should like to emphasise that NCB (Enterprise) will consider all sensible ideas put to it, and any individual, company, or other organisation that has such a project should approach it.

The old industries have been contracting, but other sources of employment are available. For example, the enterprise zone in Rotherham has been successful in attracting new businesses to the area. Between August 1983 and August 1985, 58 new and established companies, employing around 1,500 people, were attracted to the 260 acre site.

Jobs are being created in the service sector. For example, Stadium Developments is to build a £100 million retail and leisure complex — the Parkgate centre — on the outskirts of Rotherham, which will create several hundred new jobs. Co-operative Retail is to build a £6 million super store selling home furnishings at Catcliffe, near Rotherham, over the next three years, creating 200 new jobs.

It is also encouraging to see that over 4,700 people were placed in work by the public employment service alone between April last year and February this year, a rise of 15 per cent. on the previous year, and many more will have found jobs by other means.

I mention all these facts not to contradict the hon. Gentleman or to disguise the true situation — I readily acknowledge that there is a problem and that it is a serious and deep-rooted one — but to try to keep it in perspective and to demonstrate that there is good news as well as bad. But of course I accept that a great deal still needs to be done to make headway against the area's economic and social problems. The Government will do and are doing all they can to help.

Rotherham and Mexborough travel-to-work area has development area status and thus attracts the highest levels of regional aid. It has received £16·3 million by way of regional development grant since 1979. Regional assistance has helped create over 3,000 jobs and safeguard over 1,900 existing ones. This assistance is now focused directly on job creation and is evidence of the Government's real concern to help the areas worst affected by unemployment.

I am well aware of the frustration and hardship that must be felt by unemployed people in the hon. Gentleman's constituency and I recognise the corrosive effect that high levels of unemployment can have upon the social fabric and the values of a community. They can knock the life out of it and destroy hope and self-respect. That is why we have a whole range of measures targeted at those particularly badly hit, both the young and the long-term unemployed.

The extension of the youth training scheme into a two-year vocational programme from April is a major step towards ensuring that every young person under 18 is undergoing high quality training in work or in full-time education. There are currently over 6,500 in training with YTS in the Rotherham and Doncaster areas, with a similar number of planned places for 1986-87. The aim of the new scheme is to provide better qualified entrants to the labour market and it is hoped all young people will leave YTS with a recongised vocational qualification or a credit towards one. This can only improve young people's employment prospects and will ensure that no young person under 18 need be unemployed.

The hon. Member referred to the Budget and he will recall that my right hon. Friend announced in his statement yesterday the establishment of the new workers scheme, which aims to assist job seekers under 21 by providing financial assistance for employers who are able to provide more jobs for young workers at rates of pay which reflect their relative inexperience. Over 70,000 young people are expected to be covered by the scheme nationally, at a cost of some £26 million. I am sure this will prove a useful measure to help make jobs available particularly to those youngsters who may have exhausted their YTS entitlement. The new scheme will, I hope, be of significant benefit to the hon. Gentleman's constituents.

The problems of the long-term unemployed have for some time been a major concern of the Government. The

[Mr. Ian Lang]

community programme, which is our major scheme to help the long-term unemployed, is to be expanded to 255,000 places nationally this year—almost double the level of a year ago. The number of places in the Rotherham area will be 5,000 by May 1986.

The national restart programme announced in the Budget statement means that the jobstart scheme, which provides a £20 per week allowance for six months for long-term unemployed people who find jobs paying less than £80 per week has now been made a national scheme. The long-term unemployed in the hon. Gentleman's consitituency will undoubtedly benefit. They will also benefit from in-depth interviews at jobcentres and the opportunity to take short restart courses to improve their chances of finding work.

The hon. Gentleman referred to training, which is indeed an essential requirement in helping the work force to adapt to changing economic conditions and become flexible in their skills and adaptable to new opportunities. It is not just training for shop floor jobs. People need training in management skills and in how to start up in business. Under the adult training strategy, which has a planned national expenditure of £260 million this year, we are helping almost 3,000 adults in the Sheffield and Rotherham areas this year through locally delivered programmes—an increase of no less than 86 per cent.

It is important that we do all we can to encourage people to be enterprising in finding work—not only looking for an employer but seriously considering the option of self-employment. The enterprise allowance scheme was set up to help those unemployed people wishing to start their own businesses by providing a weekly allowance in the difficult initial period. More than 1,700 are currently benefiting from the scheme in the Sheffield and Wakefield areas. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced in his Budget statement, the number of places on the scheme will be increased to 100,000 nationally by April 1987—an increase of 20,000 on the current limit.

We are doing all we can to help small firms and those wishing to set up in business for the first time. We have announced a great many measures to reduce the burden of bureaucracy on small enterprises, with more proposals in the pipeline. We announced last November the provision of up to £2·5 million next year in support of local enterprise agencies. The Budget statement included a number of further measures to help small firms, including a reduction in corporation tax, the extension of the business expansion scheme and a new and upgraded small firms loan guarantee scheme lasting for three years with the premium halved from 5 to 2·5 per cent. At the local level, the Rotherham enterprise agency has helped 275 businesses start up since it was set up in 1983. Last year, it dealt with more than 1,000 inquiries. My Department's small firms service in south Yorkshire also dealt with almost 1,000 enquiries and about 100 new counselling cases since last April. There appears, therefore, to be a very healthy interest in setting up in business in this part of the world.

I hope that the House will recognise from all this that the Government are not in any way sitting by idly while hard-hit areas suffer from economic problems that they cannot deal with on their own. On the contrary, firm practical help is being given in the form of regional aid and employment and training measures. The hon. Gentleman must agree that a significant amount is being done to help the regeneration of economic activity in his constituency. The Government's commitment, together with the efforts of the people of the area will, I believe, lead to a much needed revival of their fortunes. It will not be easy, but I am certain that we are on the right road.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 20 March 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

COUNTY OF SOUTH GLAMORGAN (TAFF CROSSING BILL) *(By Order)*

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *(By Order)*

BEXLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

SHOREHAM PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

HARWICH PARKESTON QUAY BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Wednesday 26 March.

MILFORD HAVEN PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming debate on Question proposed [18 February], That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Debate further adjourned till Wednesday 26 March.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (STANSTED) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming debate on Question proposed [24 February], That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Debate further adjourned till Wednesday 26 March.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Workshops

1. **Mr. Kilroy-Silk** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has reached a decision on the prison department's recommendation that 57 prison workshops should be closed.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State hopes to make an announcement shortly.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: Before the Secretary of State comes to a decision on the future of those prison workshops, will the Minister ensure that he bears in mind that their closure would lead to a substantial reduction in the quality of the prison regime? Incidentally, the Chief Inspector of Prisons has already decided that that quality is unacceptable for the majority of inmates. Furthermore, does the hon Gentleman accept that such closures would make a mockery of the prison department's stated aim of enabling prisoners to lead a good and useful life?

Mr. Mellor: Our aim is to give prison industries a firmer base so that they can provide a more efficient service and better value for money. We certainly do not want to destroy them. We recognise that their prime aim is to provide work for inmates. As the hon. Gentleman has said, purposeful work makes a contribution to the maintenance of good order and control in establishments. Our job is to try to arrest the decline in prison industries which has been experienced during the past 12 or 15 years, and that is what we are trying to do.

Mr. Lawrence: Is my hon. Friend aware that if there is to be any hope for rehabilitative prison sentencing, more work, not less, will have to be done in prisons? If we ensure that there is a proper and widespread system of prison work, we might be able to abolish the parole system and let people work their way out of prison.

Mr. Mellor: I am afraid that ambition is well short of realisation in the real world. Work, education and vocational and physical training are all key elements in our plans. However, last year the prison industries lost £25 million, which is a matter of concern to us and to the Public Accounts Committee. Plainly we must bear that in mind and put prison industries on a more efficient footing.

Mr. Beith: Is the Minister aware that the unused workshop facilities, which represent such a gap in the rehabilitative regime that is supposed to exist in our prisons, are made worse by such cuts in the overtime budget as will occur at Castington? Indeed, I expressed fears about that during a recent Adjournment debate.

Mr. Mellor: I know of the hon. Gentleman's concern, but he also knows that this Government have made more money available to prisons than any of their predecessors did. We have strengthened the prison service and are in the process of constructing prisons that are far more pleasant for prison officers to work in. Obviously, however, we cannot do everything at once, and we must keep a tight financial grip on things such as overtime.

Mr. Soley: Does the Minister not understand that his last answer will be greeted with contempt by just about everyone who has any knowledge of the prison system, and by all the staff in the prison service? Both they and the Minister know that the Government are undermining the prison workshop regime because of the problems of prison overcrowding. The Government should be dealing with the problems of overcrowding so that workshops and education can be a proper part of the prison regime, as the inspector wants them to be.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman has made a wild statement, which is not typical of him. It must have been his lunch. I do not think that he will find people saying anything like that. Our position, in trying to run the prison system, would have been made much easier if we had inherited a system from the Labour Government that was in a less than utterly ramshackle state.

Licensing Laws

2. **Mr Knox** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received on changes in the licensing laws in England, following publication of the report of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on the effect of drinking patterns in Scotland of the Scottish licensing laws.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): Since 4 February, when the report by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys was published, I have received 10 letters from hon. Members on behalf of constituents and 23 letters from members of the public expressing views on the permitted opening hours of licensed premises in England and Wales. Of the 33, 25 supported relaxations in the law and eight were opposed.

Mr. Knox: Does the report not show the benefits that have accrued to Scotland from the liberalisation of the licensing laws north of the border? Would not England similarly benefit from a liberalisation of its over-restrictive licensing laws? When does he intend to introduce legislation in this respect?

Mr. Hurd: I have not finished studying the Scottish report, but it disposes of some of the fears that were expressed about what would happen in Scotland. There are strong arguments for considering relaxation in England and Wales. The Government would like to be sure that they stood on firm ground before embarking on a relaxation of the law.

Mr. Nelson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that our drinking laws are not only out of date and in restraint of trade but are deeply patronising to the majority of people? Is it not high time that the law was changed, and will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) that the Government should introduce legislative proposals as soon as possible?.

Mr. Hurd: I have a lot of sympathy with my hon. Friend. I notice that there is support for the idea in an early-day motion. I recall that there was similar support for the Auld committee report on Sunday trading, but that has not proved to be an entirely uncontroversial subject.

Mr. Stokes: Will my right hon. Friend first come to a settlement about the Sunday trading controversy before needlessly upsetting many more people over the drinking law?

Mr. Hurd: I rather anticipated my hon. Friend in my last answer. However, I have a lot of sympathy with the case for changing the laws, and I hope that the solid ground that I mentioned will materialise sooner rather than later.

Identity Cards

3. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, having regard to his co-operation with other Governments in countering terrorism, he will give further consideration to the introduction of identity cards in the United Kingdom.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): The Government have no proposals to introduce identity cards in the United Kingdom.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Would the suggestion not be helpful against terrorists and immigration and social security cheats? Has not the House of Commons set a good example by issuing identity cards to hon. Members, and should we not follow the example of our European partners and of our Commonwealth partner, Australia, which recently introduced identity cards, with very little dissent in that freedom-loving country?

Mr. Shaw: I fully respect my hon. Friend's observations. He is well known for his interest in this issue. He will recall that the possibility of introducing identity cars to help in the fight against crime of all kinds, including terrorism, has been considered on a number of occasions and successive Governments have felt that such documents would not be of sufficient value to overcome the genuine antipathy that exists towards them in this country. As for our European partners, my hon. Friend will know that some countries, such as Ireland and Holland, do not have identity cards.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: In co-operating with other Governments in combating terrorism, as it says in the question, does the Minister intend to take any action under section 10 of the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1974, against those companies in the City of London which sell kidnap insurance policies and are financing the IRA——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's supplementary question must be linked with identity cards.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My question was in order——

Mr. Speaker: No, I will not take points of order. The hon. Gentleman must get his question in order. Mr. Heathcoat-Amory to put the next question.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I gave the hon. Gentleman a good steer. The question concerns the introduction of identity cards in the United Kingdom in connection with terrorism. It has nothing to do with the City of London.

Motorway Speeding

4. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to seek to increase the number of prosecutions for motorway speeding offences.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The responsibility for enforcing speed limits on motorways and for deciding to prosecute rests with individual chief officers of police. The number of convictions has increased in recent years. Prevention, by highly visible deterrent patrols, is also an important part of police motorway practice.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Has my hon. Friend noticed, as he drives down the motorway, how often he is overtaken by buses and lorries greatly exceeding the speed limit? Is he aware that the tachograph, which is already fitted, can be used to provide reliable evidence of speeding and that that is already done on the continent? Will he bring in a similar system here; and, if not, why not?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend will recall that my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), when Minister of State, Department of Transport, announced in November 1985 that that Department would be investigating the fitting of speed governors on coaches, limiting them to 70 mph.

Mr. Madel: As engines and braking have improved so much in cars, should the Government not raise the speed limit to 80 mph for cars for an experimental period? That would deal with part of the problem that my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) has just mentioned in relation to buses and lorries.

Mr. Shaw: I am not clear whether my hon. Friend's suggestion is entirely fair and reasonable on the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) in his original question relating to maintaining the speed limit and seeking to bring prosecutions to observe it.

Immigration

5. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on draft guidance concerning representations by hon. Members on immigration matters.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Davis Waddington): I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) yesterday.

Mr. Madden: Will the Minister now scrap the revised guidelines, as they remain deeply offensive and are seen to be deeply objectionable by many hon. Members and their constituents? When will the hon. and learned Gentleman apologise for the serious allegations that he made against Members of Parliament, and which remain unsubstantiated, of abusing the immigration laws? When will he stop all his bluff and bluster and concentrate on what he should be doing—dealing with the crisis at Heathrow by appointing more trained immigration officers and qualified interpreters and providing for visitors to Britain proper conditions in which to be welcomed?

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman has had his shout and he will have an opportunity to shout again when there is a debate on the matter. I understand that a debate is to be arranged in the near future.

As a result of the consultation exercise that we carried out, I am satisfied that there is wide acceptance among hon. Members of the need to tighten up the system of representations by Members of Parliament. Although we have dropped the proposal about contacting the ports, the rest of the proposals remain and they will be extremely useful.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Does my hon. and learned Friend accept that for most hon. Members the right to go to Ministers is an important right which must be cherished and that the appropriate restraint in cases of this kind is usually self-restraint?

Mr. Waddington: There never has been any intention to take away from hon. Members the right to approach Ministers. There has been a certain amount of misunderstanding and some deliberate misconstruction of our proposals by Labour Members. We set out to give hon. Members a new facility to go to the ports and receive information about the reasons for a refusal direct from the immigration officer. It is nonsense to say that there is anything unconstitutional in that, because at present when a Member puts on a stop that does not interest the Minister one bit. The Minister's office is no more than a channel for communications and a place from where a message is relayed to the port.

Mr. Corbyn: In view of the continued attacks that the Minister of State makes on Members of Parliament for taking up immigration cases, will he please explain what a new immigrant family is supposed to do if their Member of Parliament has views that are so racist that he cannot be approached or refuses to take up any immigration cases?

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman is being unfair to his colleagues. Again, he is raising a matter that he will be able to raise in the forthcoming debate.

Mr. Budgen: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that, while it is important that the procedures should be fair and efficient, the interest of the country is overwhelmingly that immigration control should be firm and, in particular, that marriage should not be used in general as a means of entering the country?

Mr. Waddington: I agree entirely with the remarks made by my hon. Friend. He will notice that in the revised guidelines a passage has been added, because it became abundantly plain from the consultations that a large number of hon. Members wanted a specific mention of the problem which is caused as a result of people coming into Britain through temporary admission and then getting married.

Mr. Donald Stewart: Is the Minister aware that I am satisfied that the cases which I have referred to his Department — there have been quite a few — were handled with consideration and, indeed, in some instances, compassion? Will he assure the House that he will continue to allow Members to have access to his Department on behalf of constituents, while maintaining firm control of illegal immigration?

Mr. Waddington: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for what he has said. I assure hon. Members that my office will continue to deal with matters that they raise with consummate fairness and propriety. I repeat that hon. Members will be able to continue to raise immigration matters with the Minister.

Mr. Hayes: I congratulate my hon. and learned Friend on promising to review the immigration rules relating to child brides coming into Britain. However, does he accept that there is a major legal loophole in the Sexual Offences Act 1976? Will he consider carefully the legislation which will be coming before the House soon to prevent this outrage?

Hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that it is part of the question.

Mr. Waddington: I think my hon. Friend realises that the matter that he has raised is of great importance, but it goes very wide of the question on the Order Paper.

Mr. Soames: I broadly welcome the guidance of my hon. and learned Friend on this matter. Will he, nevertheless, assure the House that he is satisfied that there are sufficient immigration officers to deal with the many difficult cases?

Mr. Waddington: My hon. Friend has identified the problem. As a result of the number of representations having rocketed from only 1,000 in 1982 to 5,700 in 1985, far too many immigration officers are sitting in offices scribbling replies, which I have to sign and send to Members, instead of processing passengers who wish to obtain speedy entry into Britain. I am sure all hon. Members realise that, as a result of our dropping the port requirement, it becomes even more important that we should have firm time limits for making representations, so that cases can be dealt with speedily and efficiently.

Civil Defence

6. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to increase the local authority grant-aid for civil defence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My hon. Friend will have seen from the 1986-87 Supply Estimates presented to Parliament on Tuesday 18 March that it is proposed to increase the level of grant-aid from £11·9 million to £13·7 million in 1986-87.

Mr. Brown: Unfortunately, I have not yet seen those encouraging statistics. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues for that reply. Can my hon. Friend give any advice to those of us who have to face local authorities which might not be making sufficient use of those resources and which are not making proper provision for civil defence?

Mr. Shaw: The implementation of the Civil Defence Regulations 1983, now afoot throughout the country, is the most important prerequisite for making effective use of the civil defence grant to which I have referred. I trust that my hon. Friend will continue his sterling work of goading the recalcitrant local authorities to adopt a sensible approach to the security of their citizens.

Mr. Corbett: If the Minister is really interested in the security of citizens, when will he start making money available to enable local authorities to plan properly to cope with non-nuclear emergencies. At the moment little or no cash is available and there is a big hole in the safety provisions.

Mr. Shaw: I am delighted to receive that floral tribute from the hon. Gentleman. With the passage of the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) we shall be able to make it clear that local authorities can indeed use grant aid for non-nuclear, peacetime emergencies. That does not in any way stop them from making proper provision for volunteers or planning for all emergencies now.

Mr. Neil Thorne: Will my hon. Friend do his best to continue to put pressure on the Treasury to agree to 100 per cent. funding for civil defence purposes? It is one of the main reasons why local authorities are so reluctant to be involved in this issue. There is no earthly reason why a suitable adjustment should not be made to the rate support grant which would mean that no more public expenditure would be involved.

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend will be aware that there is another question on the Order Paper that relates to this issue. I shall confine myself now to making it clear that the Treasury has approved increases in grant-aid available through the Home Office—£9·1 million two years ago, £11·9 million last year and £13·7 million this year. We mean what we say. We are giving civil defence a substantial increase in expenditure.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that money spent promoting so-called nuclear-free zones provides no civil defence cover before, during or after any nuclear or any other conflagration? Does he also agree that the £81,000 of taxpayers' and ratepayers' money devoted this year by the GLC to the promotion of nuclear-free zones would have been much better spent on civil defence throughout London?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend is right. The GLC has spent just short of £500,000 on the GLAWARS study, which seems to suggest that a substantial part of the Government's policy earns the GLC's endorsement. It is ridiculous to offer anyone at any time nuclear-free zones as a form of protection.

Visiting Forces Act

7. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department at how many institutions in the United Kingdom there are personnel presently covered by the terms of the Visiting Forces Act.

Mr. Mellor: I understand that most of the personnel covered by the Act are members of United States forces stationed at eight main operational bases.

Mr. Ashdown: I am grateful to the Minister for that answer. Why does the Home Office not collect information on the number of occasions on which the jurisdiction of British courts is dodged because visiting forces claim primary jurisdiction under the Visiting Forces Act 1952? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that foreign Governments collect such information? Is he further aware that the United States Government released the information that 420 members of the United States air force had infringed British law in relation to drug abuse and that 388 of them had been removed from the jurisdiction of the British courts? We have to rely on foreign Governments for information because the Home Office will not collect it.

Mr. Mellor: It has never seemed appropriate for us to collect information about an Act which has been on the

statute book for more than 30 years and which, except for the hon. Gentleman's lonely crusade, has been generally accepted by most hon. Members as being good sense. The hon. Gentleman has given an extremely tendentious account of the arrangements. The arrangements cover who should have primary jurisdiction to deal with offences. If an offence is committed on a base and the only people involved are other service men, those forces deal with the offence in accordance with the rules of good order and discipline. If we object to the way in which they deal with the matter, we have a right under those arrangements to apply to have that jurisdiction waived. This is a way of determining who should deal with the issues. It is not a way by which the jurisdiction is "dodged", to use the hon. Gentleman's inapt expression.

Mr. Baldry: Is it not disappointing that certain hon. Gentlemen should use the Visiting Forces Act as a snide way of attacking our American allies? As one who has a United States air force base in his constituency, I remind my hon. Friend that most people believe that those service men are very good neighbours. We are grateful for the protection and assistance that they give our people.

Mr. Mellor: I quite agree with that.

Criminal Justice (White Paper)

8. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received following the publication of his recent White Paper on criminal justice.

Mr. Hurd: Very few so far, but I am glad that the White Paper has aroused considerable public interest and comment.

Mr. Yeo: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the public will be greatly reassured if powers are taken to arrange for effective guidance to be given to ensure that sentences for serious and violent crimes reflect the profound public concern about those crimes?

Mr. Hurd: There is public concern about sentencing. We carefully set out in the White Paper the various options. We preferred the option whereby guidance from the Court of Appeal should be published under statutory authority, which does not happen at the moment, and in a more accessible and single form. I think that that could provide substantial help in reassuring the public that occasional waywardness towards leniency in sentencing is corrected by those who should do that—the judiciary itself.

Mr. Chris Smith: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the extension of the maximum sentence of life imprisonment for carrying firearms, as suggested in the White Paper, would be dangerous because it would incite people who carry firearms to use them? Is that proposal not another example of the Government being more interested in the rhetoric rather than in the substance of fighting crime?

Mr. Hurd: No, Sir. I think that the hon. Gentleman has that quite wrong. We are talking about maximum sentences. If one offender uses a firearm and another merely carries one, it is open to the court to impose the greater sentence on the one who uses it.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Will my right hon. Friend look at the possibility of naming rape defendants once they are charged and also at the improper way in which rape victims tend to be named by some of the press? Both those issues cause great concern to the community at large as rape is such a shocking and detestable crime.

Mr. Hurd: As my hon. Friend knows, we are examining both those issues.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that many people are bitterly disappointed that the White Paper offers so little in the way of help to the victims of crime, whose numbers have increased dramatically since the Government came into office? The derisory £136,000 now being offered to the 282 victim support schemes shows just how little the Government really care about the victims of crime. Will the Home Secretary now reconsider the decision to fund centrally local victim support schemes?

Mr. Hurd: One of the helpful things happening in this country is the increased interest in victims and the increased growth of victim support schemes. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we support the central and national associations for those schemes and they, in turn, give guidance to local schemes. This year, for the first time, we have a relatively modest sum for direct help to local schemes. The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong about the criminal justice White Paper. One of the main points in the White Paper is the increased pressure on courts to award compensation in suitable cases.

Mr. Forth: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the public expect violent criminals to be put in prison for very long periods of time, if only to guarantee the safety of the public? Apart from the excellent prison building programme upon which the Government have now embarked, will my right hon. Friend undertake to look again at people who are now in prison and perhaps should not be, in order to ensure that those who should be in prison are guaranteed to be put there?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is quite right. Both policies must go on at the same time. We must always be looking for alternatives to custody for relatively minor offenders, some of whom now go to prison because the courts are not persuaded that there are valid alternatives. At the same time, we must ensure that serious offenders receive the prison sentences they deserve, not just because of the nature of their crime, but for the proper protection of the public.

Mr. Ryman: Will the right hon. Gentleman make it quite clear to those of his supporters who are obviously very ignorant about the machinery of justice that it is not for the Executive to express views about sentencing, but is a matter entirely for the judiciary? The right hon. Gentleman and the Executive should be careful not to infringe the discretion of the judiciary.

Mr. Hurd: I think it is perfectly reasonable that public concern about the occasional leniency of sentences should find expression in this House. In the White Paper, as the hon. Gentleman will see, we set out carefully the options for meeting this concern and I hope that he will think that the one we prefer, which I have already sketched, is the sensible one.

Mr. Spencer: If the judiciary does not pay attention to directions in the law reports or in textbooks on sentencing practice, why should it pay heed to any further publicity

on sentencing? Will my right hon. Friend consider, as a further option, giving the Crown the right of appeal against over-lenient sentences, with the requirement that the offender must serve any increased sentence?

Mr. Hurd: That is one of the options in the White Paper. For the reason that I have given, I somewhat prefer the option that is set out at greater length, which is the one I described in an earlier answer.

Mr. Kaufman: What is the use of a White Paper which deals so substantially with sentencing criminals when one cannot sentence most criminals, as most of them are not caught? In view of the fact that the clear-up rate for crimes of violence has fallen by 5 per cent. under this Government, for burglary by 9 per cent., for theft by 12·5 per cent., for fraud by 19 per cent., for criminal damage by 23 per cent., and the overall clear-up rate for crime has now fallen to 35 per cent., when, instead of this complacent waffle about crime, will the Home Secretary take effective action to deal with this record crime wave?

Mr. Hurd: Throughout his comments the right hon. Gentleman seemed to be surprised and offended that the White Paper on criminal justice deals with criminal justice and not with police strengths. Almost every day I engage the right hon. Gentleman in one way or another on police strengths, police powers, crime prevention—to which I welcome the Labour party's belated conversion—and the different aspects of our strategy. The White Paper on criminal justice deals with criminal justice. When the Government introduce a Bill in the next Session, I am sure that the different elements that it contains will receive the support that they deserve from the Opposition Benches.

Mr. Hickmet: To pick up the point of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), inasmuch as the White Paper is designed to increase the powers of the courts in relation to sentencing policy, and inasmuch as the right hon. Gentleman says that the courts cannot sentence those whom the police do not detect, what effect does my right hon. Friend think that the Labour party's policy of undermining confidence in the police and being anti-police, through their statements in this House and through the actions of the police committees, has had upon effective and efficient policing in this country and, consequently, upon the prosecution of offenders? Has not the Labour party undermined the authority of the police?

Mr. Hurd: Of course, and that is one reason why the Opposition make so much noise about it. — *[Interruption.]* They are at it again, Mr. Speaker. They know that they will not be taken seriously on this matter until they do something about Labour leaders, particularly those in London, who spend all their time undermining and sabotaging the efforts of the police.

Victims of Crime

10. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in his Department's regular statistics of crime details of the sex, age and ethnic origins and occupation of victims of crime.

Mr. Mellor: Unfortunately, we cannot do that because the requisite information is not available to all police forces that provide the data on which the regular statistics are based. But much relevant material drawn from the British crime survey is already published. An ad hoc survey of some of the information from those forces that record it was carried out in 1985, and the main results will be published by the Home Office during 1986.

Mr. Hardy: The Home Secretary was right a few moments ago when he commended the work of the victim support unit, especially at this time of absolutely astonishing and deplorable increases in crime of all kinds, but does the Minister accept that it might be useful if more were known about those who are particularly vulnerable to crime, not merely to assist in the prevention of crime, but to be of some help in determining how offenders are to be treated?

Mr. Mellor: The Government have taken forward the work in that area in a number of ways, most notably by means of the experimental reparation schemes and the increased support that they have given to the victim support movement. I have to remind the hon. Gentleman that no money was given to the victim support movement by previous Governments, although there was a crime level that more than justified a greater interest in victims than previous Governments showed.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: What is the point of knowing the ethnic origins of the victim? Does a Jew not bleed as much?

Mr. Mellor: I am sure that that must be one of the reasons why the information is not collected.

Young People (Violent Offences)

12. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many young people aged under 21 years were cautioned for, and found guilty of, violent offences in 1979 and 1984, respectively.

Mr. Mellor: Some 24,533 in 1979 and 26,891 in 1984.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If an adult under the age of 21 breaks into the home of an elderly couple and mercilessly and savagely beats them up, leading to hospitalisation, should the charge that is brought before the court be one of actual or grievous bodily harm, and should that person be allowed out on bail? Does the Minister wish to express a view on these matters?

Mr. Mellor: I should have to suppress any view, although I may well have a view, on the basis that the question of what charge is preferred is a matter for the independent prosecution authorities and that the decision as to bail is a matter for the courts. One of the purposes behind the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 is to grade offences according to the severity of the violence caused. One hopes that the charge matches the severity of the violence caused.

Mr. Favell: Should not the names of all young persons over the age of 14 who commit these appalling crimes of violence be published? Do they not deserve the derision of their neighbours?

Mr. Mellor: The general rule has always been that the names of young persons should not be so published, but I have of course taken note of my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Corbett: Will the Minister concentrate on the real problem, which is that since his Government came to power violent crime has increased by 40 per cent., while the clear-up rate has gone down by 5 per cent.? What does

to do about dealing with violent crime to prevent more and more of our people—one person every nine seconds—becoming the victims of crime?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman well knows that the rise in violent crime was just as steep—indeed, steeper—under the last Labour Government. What we have done is to strengthen the police so that more crimes are being cleared up, and to give the courts enhanced powers to deal with violent offenders. That is the appropriate way to go forward.

Civil Defence

13. **Sir Geoffrey Finsberg** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Government intend to undertake a public recruitment campaign for civil defence volunteers.

16. **Dr. Blackburn** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Government intend to increase the level of civil defence volunteer training and activity in the next 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Developments of this nature, while highly admirable, can be effective only in partnership with local authorities and if they are properly implementing the Civil Defence Regulations 1983. The Government give the highest priority to achieving this planned state of preparedness.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: Is my hon. Friend aware that it is now some three years since the House started to get concerned at the Government's inability to put sufficient pressure upon those local authorities which are quite deliberately jeopardising their citizens? Is it not about time that the regulations were amended to put some teeth into them so that local authorities could be persuaded to start recruiting the many people who want to help in this sort of valuable work?

Mr. Shaw: I fully support my hon. Friend's statement. He will recall that last year my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary issued the instructions that the regulations be enacted, and local authorities were given until December 1985 to produce plans of their civil defence preparedness. The plans are now being thoroughly investigated, and I shall be reporting to the House the result of that in due course.

Dr. Blackburn: Will my right hon. Friend recommend to local authorities that the civil defence forces that we have are a valuable means of helping in peacetime catastrophes, and will he press this with the local authorities?

Mr. Shaw: Yes, Sir. Our present range of volunteers include 1,100 scientific advisers, 13,000 community volunteers and 1,750 experts in communications. All these have an important role to play, and many of them could play a useful role in an entirely peaceful emergency.

Crimes of Violence

14. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received from the general public in recent weeks regarding crimes of violence and muggings; and what general reply he has given.

Mr. Hurd: So far this year I have received 47 expressing concern about crimes of violence and mugging. The replies generally set out the powers granted by Parliament to the courts for dealing with violent crime and explain the Government's crime strategy as it relates to these offences.

Mr. Latham: Is my right hon. Friend aware that nothing could be more harmful to social harmony than the feeling among the frail and elderly that they are not safe on the streets or even in their homes? Will he ensure that the full resources of the state, both financially and in terms of information back-up, are given to the police to help them in their struggle against violence?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, Sir. I agree with my hon. Friend. One reason why we are introducing the new offence of disorderly conduct is precisely to protect the kind of people my hon. Friend is talking about against harassment and distress. It is worth recording that, although violent crime has continued to rise for many years now, that rise has somewhat slowed down, and 75 per cent. of all offences of violence against the person are cleared up.

Mr. Alton: When the Home Secretary is looking at the rise in violent crime, will he say whether any research has been done by his Department into the link between rising numbers of muggings and crimes of violence and the drugs trade? Will he say whether very many of the young people involved in these kinds of crimes are heroin addicts themselves?

Mr. Hurd: It is difficult to get statistics about this. The hon. Member is quite right about its importance. Undoubtedly there is growing anecdotal evidence that more and more of the kinds of crimes with which the question deals are prompted by a desire to finance drug-taking.

Mr. Dubs: Is the Home Secretary not appalled that under the Conservative Government crimes of violence have increased by 40 per cent.? This is what is worrying people throughout the country. Is it not true, as he said quite effectively in a press statement last week, that, however one looks at the facts and figures, the reality is bleak?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with that. What I disagree with is the implication in the hon. Gentleman's question that this started in 1979. It has been going on for 30 years now. The peak age for offending by males is 15, and by females it is 14. That brings out the whole question of the responsibility of parents and of teachers as well as of the courts.

Civil Defence

15. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Government intend to implement 100 per cent. grant-aid outside rate support grant to local authorities for civil defence expenditure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Representations in support of extending the items eligible for 100 per cent. civil defence grant-aid are being actively considered and I will inform the House of the outcome.

Mr. Bowden: Does my hon. Friend agree that 90 per cent. of local authorities will fail to fulfil their civil defence requirements until there is 100 per cent. funding?

Mr. Shaw: I fully sympathise with my hon. Friend's view that, particularly on staff costs, a strong case is made

for extending the 100 per cent. grant. However, my hon. Friend should understand that we must consider closely the implications of any such extension.

Crime Prevention (Community Programme)

17. **Mr. Couchman** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what involvement his Department has in promoting crime prevention projects through the community programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In October last year my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary announced an initiative designed to link the MSC community programme firmly with crime prevention projects. Since then a team has been set up within the Home Office to support the development of such projects. An explanatory booklet, "Crime Prevention and the Community Programme", has been widely distributed to various statutory and voluntary bodies in England and Wales to assist prospective sponsors.

Mr. Couchman: Is my hon. Friend satisfied with progress on the projects which seek to curtail crime?

Mr. Shaw: I certainly would not say that we can be satisfied, but the increasing efforts made through the community programme and the substantial number of places that are being offered under it augur well for crime prevention in city centres.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 March.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I attended the memorial service for Mr. Palme in Westminster Abbey. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Penhaligon: As a result of the Budget a married man will, on his 72nd earned pound, pay 29p in tax, but someone fortunate enough to inherit £10 million from a rich parent will have the tax reduced from £3 million to nothing. What have the Government got against working?

The Prime Minister: I make no apology for this Government having reduced the confiscatory levels of taxation on those with considerable earnings and accumulated capital. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to join the Opposition Front Bench in going back to 83 per cent. on earned income and 98 per cent. on savings, will he let us know what Liberal party policy is?

Q2. **Mr. Wilkinson** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wilkinson: In view of the alarming increase in the incidence of violent crime, particularly by young people, can my right hon. Friend find time today to reconsider carefully the potential merits of the reintroduction of national service, especially as national service, in addition to the youth training scheme, could be an invaluable way of providing young people with the technical training and skills which they need in today's world?

The Prime Minister: I know my hon. Friend's views on this, but it would mean an enormous change in the whole of our defence policy, which is founded on professional armed services, and which has served the country well. Although I know that he would like to give many young people an opportunity of belonging to something like the armed services, I do not think I can promise him anything on this so far as I can see in the future. We prefer to rely on the armed services youth training scheme to give some people the opportunity.

Mr. Kinnock: The Chancellor of the Exchequer rightly said on Tuesday:

"given the very substantial increase in the oil companies' margins, there is clearly no need for the pump price of petrol to go up at all. Indeed, it ought to fall further." — [*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 180.]

In view of the refusal of the major oil companies to follow that view, will the Prime Minister give an undertaking now that if the oil companies do not cut the price of a gallon of petrol by the 12p which they could well afford, she will take away their gains in a windfall tax on profits?

The Prime Minister: I think that the right hon. Gentleman is a little premature. I support wholly what the Chancellor said. Indeed, we said virtually as much in the House before the Budget. If the majors do not hold down their prices, they will stand to lose out to the independents, who are purchasing and selling at cheaper prices. Therefore, they would not gain. I think that the announcement in which they said that they would put up their prices has already done them a great deal of harm.

Mr. Kinnock: At the rate of £14 million a week in extra profit, which the oil majors will make if they do not cut their prices, they will be laughing all the way to the bank. Why does the Prime Minister not use the power that she has instead of offering what is now only a pious sentiment and expressing a hope in competition, which will probably not be realised?

The Prime Minister: I think that it will take place. I think that people are shrewd enough to go to the independents, which are charging far less for petrol. I find it amazing that people will choose to go to those who charge higher prices when they can go to the independents, which, I have no doubt, will offer considerable competition.

Q3. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Leigh: In the course of her busy day, has the Prime Minister had an opportunity to read Bernard Shaw's "The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism", and in particular, the phrase:

"money is made for us to get what we want, instead of what other people think we ought to want."

Is not the theme of this Budget that tax cuts will enable the British people to get what they want, rather than what the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) thinks they ought to want?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend, and that is why we are making a point of reducing personal

income tax. Had we left the national insurance surcharge —introduced and then raised by a Labour Government —where it was, personal income tax could already be down to 25p in the pound on the basic rate.

Q4. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cartwright: Has the Prime Minister had time to note the admission by the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government yesterday that sulphur pollution from British power stations is damaging Norwegian lakes? In the light of that admission, will the Government now ensure that all coal-fired power stations, particularly the five new ones announced yesterday, will be so designed as to cut sulphur emissions?

The Prime Minister: Obviously we shall try to design new power stations so that there are even greater improvements than those which we have achieved on sulphur emission. This Government's record on reducing pollution is very good indeed.

Mr. Rhodes James: Has the Prime Minister's attention been drawn to the deliberate physical assaults upon and intimidation of Professor John Vincent of Bristol university, who is an eminent and deeply respected historian? His lectures have been disrupted, his teaching prevented, his family afflicted, simply because he writes occasional articles for a paper owned by Mr. Rupert Murdoch. What has happened to free speech that we had —and for which we went through two world wars—and why is the Leader of the Opposition so silent about these outrages?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that such assaults are intolerable and should never occur in a free country. They should be condemned by everyone on both sides of this House.

Q5. **Mr. Garrett** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Garrett: I appreciate that the Prime Minister has a busy schedule and that she will not be able to attend the launch next week at Swan Hunters on Tyneside of HMS Sheffield. This ship replaces one sunk in the Falklands. Could she make arrangements to attend the launch on 8 April, the following week, of her sister ship, HMS Coventry? She will see, on both occasions, that both ships have gone down the slipway on time, and both have been secured as the result of hard, competitive bargaining with the Ministry of Defence. Is the right hon. Lady aware that, now that those ships are nearing completion, there will be a gap, and it is important that, on a free competitive basis, further orders be given to fill this gap in the work load, or there will be redundancies?

The Prime Minister: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman and the work force of Swan Hunters on producing these ships on time. I recognise that further orders have to be placed on a competitive basis. I know the one about which he is concerned, and I stress that the order has to be done on a competitive basis.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend will know that last week the Select Committee on the Environment published a report on the disposal of nuclear waste. Does she agree that before any special development order is laid before the House authorising exploratory work to be carried out at Fulbeck airfield, time should be given for the fullest debate and consideration of the report, and that the special development order should be deferred until such time?

The Prime Minister: I am aware that my hon. Friend has a particular interest in one of the sites, Fulbeck, which I also happen to know. I shall pass on the message to my right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal, and I understand that he will want a full debate on these matters.

Dr. Owen: In view of the need to increase industrial competitiveness, why did the Government not use the money that they had given away in a penny off the standard rate of income tax to cut national insurance contributions by 10 per cent., which would also have had a substantially greater impact on unemployment?

The Prime Minister: Because, having already abolished the national insurance surcharge — the right hon. Gentleman was a member of the Government that put it on and increased it—it was felt that those in industry should also have some incentive. I shall be interested to see whether the right hon. Gentleman votes against the reduction.

Mr. Churchill: Has my right hon. Friend noticed the much greater alacrity with which oil companies have put up their prices, compared to the way they bring them down in line with worldwide prices? If the oil majors persist in refusing to heed the words of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and other Ministers, will my right hon. Friend consider referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission?

The Prime Minister: I shall pass that message on to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. We should wait a little to see whether the oil majors take the advice of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, which was clearly given. If they do not, they will not get as much business. Therefore, they will have less profit than they would otherwise receive.

Q6. **Ms. Richardson** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Richardson: As all women in a certain age group have to spend about £2 or £3 a month on sanitary products, when many of them are in low-paid jobs or on supplementary benefit, and as they have not had one penny of help out of the Budget, will the Prime Minister ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to take the earliest opportunity to remove VAT from sanitary products?

The Prime Minister: No. I believe that this is a matter that has come up every year on the Budget for many years under all Governments. I am afraid that I shall have to disappoint the hon. Lady.

Q7. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pawsey: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the concern that is felt in some quarters about the introduction

of the GCSE examination? Can she confirm that the examination is on target and that some adequate resources have been put into the system to ensure that teachers will be adequately trained in the new examination when it is introduced later this year?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend implies, I am aware that there is a great deal of concern about the timing of the new examination. I also know that considerable resources are being put into the programme—about £10 million for teacher training, and about £20 million for special equipment and textbooks. Although there is concern about the timing, I know of no proposal to postpone the introduction of this examination.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Has the Prime Minister seen the recent Harris Poll finding, showing that a huge 91 per cent. of the electorate want Members of Parliament to be given a free vote on Sunday trading? Would it not be totally outrageous for her Government to try to steamroll the Shops Bill through, in the light of that finding?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, the Bill has come from another place, and I think he must leave whipping until the Bill is going through this House.

Q8. **Mr. Favell** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Favell: What does my right hon. Friend think would be the effect on the Treasury of suddenly losing £5 billion of revenue if, God forbid, we ever had another Labour Government—or an alliance one, come to that?

The Prime Minister: It would not be long before this country went to the International Monetary Fund again, and we must see that that never happens and that the possibility of a Labour Government does not happen.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Does the Prime Minister recall that before the election she was making scathing references to the enormous salaries of the City slickers? She was also referring to the tax imposed on the low-paid £140-a-week nurse. Does she concede that, as a result of the Budget, the City slicker on a salary of over £100,000 is getting more than £30 a week back in income tax while the £140-a-week nurse is getting 30 bob, and, if she lives in nursing accommodation and is threatened with eviction, she will be even worse off?

The Prime Minister: But according to what I understood from the hon. Gentleman's own Front Bench yesterday, his party will not vote against the reduction of basic rate income tax.

Mr. Hickmet: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During questions to Home Office Ministers the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) accused some Members of being racists. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw that remark, especially as it is particularly offensive coming from a Member who has entertained the IRA in this Palace.

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear a remark of that kind, but I am sure that the whole House would agree that we do not want comments of that sort levelled across the Chamber, if it was said.

Business of the House

3.33 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 24 MARCH—Conclusion of the debate on the Budget statement.

Consideration of the Lords amendment to the Museum of London Bill.

Motions on the Redundant Mineworkers and Concessionary Coal (Payments Schemes) Order and the Coal Industry (Limit on Payments in respect of Redundant Mineworkers) Order.

TUESDAY 25 MARCH—Third Reading of the Gas Bill —(2nd Allotted Day).

Motion for the Easter Adjournment

Consideration of Lords amendments to the Local Government Bill.

WEDNESDAY 26 MARCH—There will be a debate on Members' Representations on immigration cases on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

THURSDAY 27 MARCH—The House will meet at 9.30 am, take questions until 10.30 am and adjourn at 3.30 pm until Tuesday 8 April.

The House may also be asked to consider other business as necessary.

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. Does he recall that he has given repeated undertakings that when a conclusion to the negotiations about British Leyland is reached

"it will be for the House to debate and decide upon the result of those negotiations." — [*Official Report*, 20 February 1986; Vol. 92, c. 480.]?

No such debate is listed for debate next week. In view of the strong reports of the exchanges between the parties involved in the BL business, there is now widespread concern about the possibility that the House will be denied the opportunity which the right hon. Gentleman has been promising. Can he allay that justifiable anxiety by giving an undertaking now that there will be no conclusive settlement of purchase by anyone or by any organisation unless and until the House has debated and decided upon the course of events?

Could the right hon. Gentleman tell the House whether the Government will accept the Lords amendments to the Local Government Bill, and will he give us an undertaking that no subsequent legislation will be introduced to frustrate the effect of those amendments?

Finally, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for a foreign affairs debate to be held as soon as possible after the House returns following the Easter recess? I have asked for a statement on the Government's attitude to President Reagan's readiness to contemplate the use of military force against Nicaragua and to finance the terrorist Contra rebels. The House should have an opportunity to debate that issue as well as the many other matters of pressing interest.

Mr. Biffen: In respect of British Leyland, the undertakings that I gave on 20 February still stand, but I understand why the right hon. Gentleman raises that point, since no debate on British Leyland has been announced for next week. Clearly, if it were necessary to change the business to provide for such a debate, it would be a matter for discussion through the usual channels. In any event, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will make a statement to the House before the House rises for the Easter recess.

On the question of the treatment of Lords amendments to the Local Government Bill, it would be apropriate for the Minister in charge of the Bill to make known Government policy in due course.

On the question of a foreign affairs debate, I take account of what the right hon. Gentleman says. Perhaps we can consider that through the usual channels.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Has my right hon. Friend's attention been drawn to early-day motion 595 in the names of responsible Opposition Members and some Conservative Members congratulating Spain on its wise decision to remain within the NATO Alliance?

[That this House congratulates the Spanish people on their massive re-affirmation of membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.]

Has he further noticed an amendment entirely to the contrary tabled by the loony Left? In those circumstances, would it not be useful to have a debate so that we may clarify precisely where the Opposition stand on the important matter of the NATO Alliance?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend raises a pertinent point. When we have the foreign affairs debate, which I hope cannot be too long delayed, it will be an opportunity for hon. Members in all parts of the House to assert their commitment to NATO and to a NATO which depends on nuclear weapons.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Having heard the request of the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) that the debate on the special development orders on the NIREX sites should be deferred until the Environment Select Committee report has been discussed, will the Leader of the House give an assurance that that will be done?

Will there be a debate on the Sunday trading Bill in the first week after we return, and will the right hon. Gentleman's right hon. and hon. Friends be given a free vote?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman has asked me about a free vote so often that, if I were less generous, I would judge that he was a slow learner. That is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary. I take note of his concern that the Second Reading debate is held reasonably soon after our return. We shall have to see what progress we make.

On the hon. Gentleman's first point, the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) are of great seriousness, and I shall take account of them when judging the timing of the debates on that topic.

Sir Frederic Bennett (Torbay): As it now seems that we shall have a foreign affairs debate, of which we have comparatively few, will my right hon. Friend ensure that it is broadly drawn because we do not want it to develop merely into a discussion of matters regarding one small country in Central America, or, with due respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant), even the Spanish adhesion to NATO? We

[Sir Frederic Bennett]

should also like to discuss the question of continuing Soviet aggression and massacre in Afghanistan, and continuing Soviet-guided oppression in Poland.

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that my right hon. Friend echoes what has long been the tradition in foreign affairs debates —they are drawn and tabled in such a way as to enable the widest possible discussion.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): Is the Leader of the House aware that yesterday the Government announced some £45 million of expenditure at Waterloo station to accommodate the terminus for the Channel fixed link? Is he further aware that, of 30 questions that I put to the Secretary of State for Transport on the matter, more than 20 were simply referred back to British Rail and a consultation document that does not answer them? Will he encourage his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to make a statement to the House on how the money will be used so that both local communities and commuters in the southern region can see what congestion is likely to result at Waterloo from its being the exclusive terminus for the link?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that the whole House will sympathise with the hon. Gentleman over his misfortune about trying to table questions effectively. He raises a point of substance and I will draw it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Is my right hon. Friend aware that in the last 12 months there have been several indications of the impending publication of the Government's proposals about family courts? Those indications have not been fulfilled. In view of suggestions that we are to see something before Easter, may we look forward to a statement next week about the publication of these proposals?

Mr. Biffen: I am unable to answer my hon. Friend, but I will take up his point with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North): Will the Leader of the House ask his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to make a statement about the British Steel Corporation's tubes division strike in my constituency and also in the constituency of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith)? Will he make representations to the chairman and the chairman-elect of the British Steel Corporation to get both sides to the negotiating table as quickly as possible in an effort to resolve this disastrous dispute? It is disastrous not only for the men but for the country.

Mr. Biffen: I can probably best help the hon. Gentleman by getting in touch with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): My right hon. Friend said that there would be a statement on British Leyland before the Easter recess. That statement will have ramifications in different parts of the country, and, in view of that, may I ask that the debate on the statement should not take place until after Easter? That will give us time to consult locally with the management and the workforce. We do not want a rush job on this because it has many important investment and employment ramifications.

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend says and I understand the judgment which prompts him to make that request. I have said that the matter will be discussed through the usual channels, and I must stand by that.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that there is great interest among all hon. Members about the impending voluntary agreement with the tobacco industry about advertising and sports sponsorship? Has he noticed that the last written question today, question 172, calls for an answer on this subject? That is a wholly unsatisfactory way of informing the House about a matter of major interest. Will he make sure that next week the Minister makes a statement to the House that can be questioned by hon. Members on both sides of the House?

Mr. Biffen: I will draw the hon. Gentleman's point to the attention of my right hon. Friend. He could chance his arm with an Adjournment debate on this topic.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Rather than worrying about three line Whips — because a 30 line Whip would not induce me to vote for the Shops Bill — will my right hon. Friend spend his time at Easter considering whether we need to proceed with this regrettable measure?

Mr. Biffen: I am looking forward to eight days during which the topic will be erased from my memory. I know that it will still be here when I return.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): Has the attention of the Leader of the House been drawn to early-day motions 630 and 631, which were tabled late last evening and which are headed by all the names of the Opposition Members of the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill?

[That the Order [16th December] relating to the nomination of the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill be discharged.]

[That it be an instruction to the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill that it do not report the Bill to the House until: (a) it has received written and oral evidence on the conclusions of Mr. David Calcutt Q.C. on matters referred to him by the Secretary of State for Defence, as announced on 29th October 1985 and (b) it has received any oral evidence which the honourable Member for Newry and Armagh may wish to give and received oral evidence from the Ministry of Defence on the contents of their memoranda submitted to it on the rôle of the Ulster Defence Regiment insofar as it relates to the provisions of the Armed Forces Bill.]

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that almost without precedent a gag has been put upon members of the Select Committee about receiving and hearing oral evidence from the Ministry of Defence, from hon. Members and from members of the public? Is he further aware that a guillotine motion on the Select Committee's proceedings was moved by the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of State for the Armed Forces who was serving on that Bill, and that there has been a clear abuse and a tyrannical use of Government power by the man who tried to gag Clive Ponting? He is trying to do it to Members of Parliament on that same Select Committee. Will the Leader of the House instruct his friends on that Committee not to proceed with the business of the Committee until we have discussed both these early-day motions?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that there are conventions which inhibit my role concerning what happens in Select Committees. In any case, the House will be able to debate the issues raised in the Select Committee when the Armed Forces Bill is reported to the House.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Although my right hon. Friend has no direct responsibility for the French National Assembly's problems of cohabitation with President Mitterrand, can he confirm that certain difficulties arise from the current situation in France that have created a virtual hiccup in progress on the Bill on the Channel tunnel? In view of the constitutional problems in France, will my right hon. Friend give the House his assurance that no attempt will be made to introduce or vote on the Bill in this House until the French have sorted out their domestic problems?

Mr. Biffen: I hate to tangle with my hon. Friend, particularly on this topic, but his enthusiasm over the French having got themselves into a fearful mess because of their change of Government might be a little premature. However, I take note of his remarks, and realise that the House will wish to return to the issue after the Easter recess.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): As the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill would not permit me to give oral evidence in relation to behaviour and discipline in the UDR, will the leader of the House arrange for a debate on that issue if only to circumvent such censorship and to protect the right of free speech of hon. Members elected to the House?

Mr. Biffen: I certainly do not accept the hon. Gentleman's description of the behaviour of my colleagues in Committee upstairs. However, if he wishes to pursue the matter, he should consider raising it during the debate on the Easter Adjournment motion or on one of the Adjournment debates immediately before the recess.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Has my right hon. Friend seen the directive agreed yesterday by the Commission in Brussels which is designed to restrict the percentage of non-Common Market programmes shown on British television? In view of the importance of that in undermining the independence and authority of the BBC and the Independent Broadcasting Authority, will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that a Minister makes a statement next week saying whether the Government support that plan? Also, could the Single European Act be forced on Britain by a majority decision of the member states?

Mr. Biffen: I am beginning to realise how lack-lustre my life is, as I do not have the opportunity to pay such close attention as my hon. Friend obviously does to the European Commission's affairs. However, I shall study his point, and be in touch.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Given the rise in the number of reported cases of rape, will the Leader of the House find time next week to debate the need for the proper funding of rape crisis centres, the fact that the Home Office should run a campaign to educate women to be able to protect themselves better, the proper retraining of police forces and the creation of special units to train those dealing with sex crimes?

Mr. Biffen: I accept at once the importance of that point, but I think that the hon. Lady will agree that there are several Adjournment debates next week when it would be most appropriate to raise it.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Following the tragic and untimely death of my constituent, the boxer, Steve Watt, will my right hon. Friend encourage the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey), to hold discussions with the medical profession on improving protection against serious injury to boxers?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend has raised a point of real and tragic seriousness, and I shall certainly draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister to it.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Given the Government's welcome decision to drop their vindictive campaign against trade unionists at GCHQ, will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate on the individual's right to belong to a trade union in a free society?

Mr. Biffen: I am always anxious to try to provide occasions for the hon. Gentleman to say thank you, but this time it might not be possible quite yet because of all the other demands on Government time.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): May we have a clear statement soon on the Government's attitude towards flexible licensing hours, lest inaction causes unnecessary disappointment to brewery workers, workers in the tourist industry and Conservative supporters who believe that their party is against unnecessary nannying?

Mr. Biffen: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is wrestling with one major aspect of liberalisation and perhaps we should let him get that out of the way before considering other matters.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Does the Leader of the House accept that next Wednesday's debate on the motion for the Adjournment of the House cannot possibly deal with the basic iniquity of separating families and will, in any event, come too late for some families? I think, for example, of the Vengadasamys in my constituency, where the father has been forced to return to Malaysia, leaving his wife and five children behind, and of Mr. Lakhatrariya, who is being forced out even though his wife is extremely unwell and they have a doctor's report. Is there to be no consideration of basic legislation to prevent the separation of families, which would never be countenanced in other countries that we criticise?

Mr. Biffen: I am not clear from what the hon. and learned Gentleman has said whether the cases he has quoted were in respect of illegal immigrants. The hon. and learned Gentleman ought to take advantage of next Wednesday's debate—for all its limitations—to make his point, which, I believe, is in favour of more liberal immigration laws.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Will my right hon. Friend accept that it is the fairly clear view of the House that we should not be asked to debate special development orders on nuclear waste until we have been given the opportunity to debate the Select Committee's report? That being so, it may be some time before we debate the special development orders. In such circumstances, will my right

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

hon. Friend make early arrangements for a debate on the subject of compensation, as my constituents are suffering financial loss as a result of the announcement made by NIREX that Fulbeck is a possible site for the disposal of nuclear waste?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) put his point more shrewdly and skilfully than my hon. Friend. My hon. Friend is asking me to be more specific than I can reasonably undertake to be at the Dispatch Box. I must disappoint him, and that saddens me no end.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Leader of the House draw the attention of his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department to early-day motion 619?

[That this House is alarmed at the recent revelation of activity by the Contras against the democratically elected government of Nicaragua; is appalled that on 25th January 1985 in Waslala, Zelaya, a group of civilian travellers and children were ambushed on their way to meet President Ortega; is horrified that on 29th June 1984, Paco Sivilla, a teacher from Brownback, was hunted by a group of Contras and his ears, tongue and private parts cut off before he was brutally murdered; is shocked that in July 1984 Adám Flores, a 70-year-old man, was murdered by a force of 70 Contras; further believes that these are a few examples of the most appalling murders by Contra forces gainst the people of Nicaragua; believes that President Reagan's attempts to send a further $100 million in aid to the Contras can only continue the war and result in further murders of the Nicaraguan people; and accordingly demands that Her Majesty's Government put all possible pressure on President Reagan to cease all support for the Contras and respect the territorial integrity and peaceful wishes of the people of Nicaragua.]

It concerns the Contras' violence against the people of Nicaragua.

Will the right hon. Gentleman further arrange for his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to make a statement to the House about what efforts the Government have made to stop the sending of further aid to the Contras which can only lead to more murders and violations of human rights by the Contras forces backed by the United States? Does he accept that that is an urgent and important matter in the quest for world peace?

Mr. Biffen: I cannot accept the hon. Gentleman's description of the conflict which now unhappily divides Nicaragua. I will try to arrange as soon as I reasonably can a debate on foreign affairs in which the hon. Gentleman's point can be made.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Does my right hon. Friend recall the assurances given by Her Majesty's Government about budget discipline in the EC following the Fontainebleau meeting? Is he aware that we are almost bound to get a large supplementary budget out of the EC this year demanding more money? Will he assure the House that, if that happens, we will be given the fullest possible opportunity to debate the matter and that we have a range of options to consider and not just a "take it or leave it" from the Government?

Mr. Biffen: I will certainly bear in mind my hon. Friend's point should that situation arise when I make my propositions about how the matter should be handled.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): Would it be possible to have a sensible answer today from the Leader of the House about the colliery review procedure? Is he aware that this procedure has now fallen wholly into disrepute as many of the coal mining unions are contemplating refusal to participate in it? Is he also aware that the National Coal Board made its decision in respect of the Bates colliery closure in the face of the evidence of the recommendation made by the independent colliery review body? Is he further aware that, had NACODS had the courage and guts to help the coal miners at Bates colliery, the coal mining industry would have suffered enormously by a slowing down of production.

Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that nobody believes a word that the Secretary of State for Energy says about pit closures and therefore it is no use the Leader of the House giving me his customory, supercilious answer that he will refer the matter to the Secretary of State for Energy as no one believes a word the Secretary of State says?

Mr. Biffen: I seem to have spent most of today either listening to the hon. Gentleman or reading about him. I am afraid that I cannot add anything to what I said at this time last week, and I am sorry that such a sentiment is so unsatisfactory to him.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Will right hon. Friend turn his attention to some of the takeover battles that are going on in the City? Is he aware that a new and sinister trend has started which involves squalid and vicious attempts to discredit chairmen and directors? Does he agree that such tactics are completely unethical and bring shame on a great institution? May we discuss that here?

Mr. Biffen: I understand very well why my hon. Friend feels compelled to raise that point and it is appropriate that I should draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to his comments.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an early debate on sentencing policy so that the House can take account of the strong feelings throughout Britain, particularly in London, on rape and the calls of many members of the public for life sentences for convicted rapists, the naming of convicted rapists, and for life to mean life in particularly nasty cases?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend's point will cause concern within the Chamber and deep public anxiety. I shall refer his remarks to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, although I must say that, given the pressure on Government time from now on as we have to deal with the Finance Bill and Report stages of other legislation, I cannot promise that there will be an opportunity for an early debate in Government time.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): May I remind my right hon. Friend that the proposals of NIREX in selecting four sites for the disposal of low and intermediate level nuclear waste have caused great concern in the constituencies involved, one of which is in South Humberside, adjacent to my constituency? May I also remind my right hon. Friend that the Select

Committee's report on the disposal of nuclear waste undermines many of the proposals of NIREX and that it would be unsatisfactory if we were to debate the special development order giving powers to survey in the various areas concerned before the Select Committee's report has been debated because if the recommendations were accepted the NIREX proposals would be left high and dry?

Mr. Biffen: I gave a fairly generous reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) and I cannot go further than that. I know only too well how important this is to a number of my hon. Friends and they argue their constituency cases properly, legitimately and vigorously.

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): With regard to Leyland, and in my case particularly Land Rover, will my right hon. Friend accept from me that some of us have found it the tiniest bit hard this afternoon to reconcile his remarks about next week's business with what we have been told in the past about a decision before Easter and a debate before a decision? That having been said, will he accept from me that we would sincerely rather have the right decision after Easter than a wrong or hurried one before Easter?

Mr. Biffen: This is a topic on which I am best advised to say that I note what my hon. Friend says.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on the registration and licensing of nursing homes and residential care homes? Is he aware that, under the Registered Homes Act 1984, 4,509 homes were registered in 1983 but that in 1985 the number had shot up by 45 per cent. to 6,443? I am sure that my right hon. Friend will agree that that growth industry is a matter for concern, and more adequate and professional staff should be appointed. Can something be done to arrange a debate to protect the elderly, who are being put into those homes at the expense of the Department of Health and Social Security?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to that aspect of the development in our welfare services which is proceeding at such speed. As he will appreciate, the Department of Health and Social Security is top for questions next Tuesday, and I suspect that he will also take an interest in the matter when it comes to the Adjournment debates.

Easter Adjournment

Mr. Speaker: I have a short statement to make about the Easter Adjournment debates. I remind hon. Members that on the motion for the Adjournment of the House on Thursday 27 March up to nine Members may raise with Ministers subjects of their own choice. Applications should reach my office by 10 pm by Monday next. A ballot will be held on Tuesday morning and the results made known as soon as possible thereafter.

Orders of the Day

WAYS AND MEANS

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [18 March].

AMENDMENT OF THE LAW

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the national Debt and public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply;

(b) for refunding any amount of tax;

(c) for varying the rate of that tax otherwise than in relation to all supplies and importations; or

(d) for any relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

Budget Resolutions and Economic Situation

Relevant documents: European Community Document No. 9792/85, Annual Economic Report 1985-86 and the unnumbered document, Annual Economic Report 1985-86 (final version as adopted by the Council).

3.59 pm

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I always believe, in my simple way, that it is possible to get some agreement on objectives on both sides of the House. I hope that there is broad agreement, certainly in the county, that the main aim of the Budget has to be to maintain the present excellent performance of the economy in such a way as to speed up the number of new jobs which will be created. *[Interruption.]* It is no good Opposition Members deriding that statement of aim and description of the economy. One of the most notable aspects of the Budget statement of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer was the extremely good outlook that he was able to describe to the House and the country.

We face the best economic outlook that most people of today's working generation have ever faced in their lifetime. We expect high growth, low inflation, falling oil prices and stable exchange rates at levels at which we can be competitive. Yesterday interest rates fell. I do not know of the experience of my hon. Friends or of Opposition Members, but most of the people I have met over the past few years in the manufacturing industries have told me that those are the conditions that we must try to create. All these things explain why employment has been rising faster in the United Kingdom than in the rest of the European Community. First, as a general proposition, the Chancellor has created the conditions for jobs. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on that and on his Budget measures. In my opinion, if my right hon. Friend had not used the slogan "Budget for jobs" last year, he could have used it forcefully for this Budget.

When people first react to a Budget, they immediately take on board the tax changes as they affect day-to-day life —a penny off the basic rate of income tax, 11p on a packet of cigarettes, nothing on beer, and so on. It will

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

take a little more time for people to appreciate the complete extent of the employment measures in this Budget. They are extensive and they are ambitious. But, quite predictably, the principal complaint of all the Opposition parties is that they do not appear to cost enough to the taxpayer.

Most of our critics tend to pluck large figures of public expenditure out of the air and then claim that thousands of new jobs would be created if this spending went in certain directions. I have to say that, having considered most of the rival propositions which have been put forward over the past few months, the connection between the cash and the jobs is usually highly debatable.

In the Budget we have programmes which will be less expensive to the taxpayer than those urged upon us, but they will be more effective. We now have the opportunity to consider these measures in greater detail. First, we have measures designed to produce more new businesses and new jobs. The enterprise allowance scheme has been highly successful in helping unemployed people to set themselves up in business. Very many unemployed people — surprising numbers — would like to have a go at working self-employed in a business of their own. We offer support of £40 each week for a year and business advice for many who do so. My right hon. Friend announced in the Budget that we are now nearly doubling the size of this programme. Now we will be helping no fewer than 2,000 unemployed people each week to start working for themselves.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): The Minister is seeking to proclaim the cost-effectiveness of expenditure on this scheme as compared with other schemes. Does he agree with his Department's figures that, for every 100 jobs created under this scheme, only 50 real jobs are created because they are replacing 50 other jobs — jobs which already exist? If the Minister had spent the money on the community programme, there would have been 93 new jobs created for every 100 jobs.

Mr. Clarke: We have studied carefully the cost per job created in each scheme, as we have for all the schemes that I shall outline. I shall come later to the expansion of the community programme.

All these schemes which we are expanding compare extremely favourably in cost per job terms with any of the rival propositions urged upon us. There is some deadweight in all of them — some displacement, some small businesses which do not succeed — but I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the enterprise allowance scheme has been highly successful. The vast majority of the new businesses thrive and many will provide fresh employment as they plan to take on employees within a year or two of starting up. I am not comparing this with the community programme; we are expanding that as well. I compare it with the propositions contained in the rival budget of the alliance, many of dubious quality and a high cost per job.

I assume that the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) will support the enterprise allowance scheme. The fact that we shall help 2,000 unemployed people each week is welcome.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Although I welcome strongly the expansion of the scheme, is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that in some cases the taxation liability arising from being paid the enterprise allowance can be larger than the enterprise allowance? Will he look at this aspect in reforming the scheme?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for drawing my attention to that. I think that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced in the Budget ending, and certainly has the intention of ending, that tax anomaly. It is a valid point, and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has agreed to put it right in the Finance Bill.

We are dealing with the existing measures which will be expanded and we are introducing a new version of the small firms loan guarantee scheme, which will last for three years. Over the past seven months since I have been in the Department, I have repeatedly met business men whose enterprises are beginning to thrive and expand and who have impressed upon me how this scheme was essential to give them the working capital they need to start. The main snag with the old scheme was that loans were expensive with extra high interest being paid. We are halving the premium on new borrowing to 2·5 per cent. This will make the scheme even more successful and attractive to small businesses which need capital to expand.

The Opposition can never decide what their attitude should be to the EAS, the small firms loan guarantee scheme, to small firms, self-employment and personal enterprise. I have to tell them that small firms and self-employment are among the major sectors for employment growth worldwide and that we have a long way to go before we catch up with other countries. The Labour and trades union movement's apparent obsession with "smoke stack" industries is yet another example of their determination to put the clock back. The Government are determined to help those who wish to work for themselves or to set up small businesses — not least because they have to make an important contribution to the continuing growth in employment in Britain.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): We fully support all programmes which increase economic activity and increase jobs. There is no doubt about that. It would come a little bit stronger from the Minister for Employment if he recognised that many Labour authorities, through their enterprise and economic units, have created many small businesses and they are often much more effective than the Government. The Government and, in particular, the Chancellor have denied £8 million to the GLC to do that type of work.

Mr. Clarke: I shall look forward to receiving the support for small business schemes which the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has promised. It is certainly true that the Labour and trades union movements are not in the forefront of initiating policies which seek to expand self-employment or small business in any way.

The hon. Member refers to the activity of local authorities with regard to small business support and enterprise. When such support is well directed and carefully thought out, the Government are quite prepared to support it. I recognise that some councils do a reasonable job. However, the effectiveness of councils' actions varies considerably up and down the country. In my opinion, there are certainly a large number of local

authorities which ought to pay greater attention to keeping down the rate burden on businesses in their areas than they do in attempting to get into the enterprise policy area.

I certainly query the cost per job effectiveness of many of the things done by local councils. I shall probably have the support of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East when I state that the schemes I have described are cost effective and well directed. I have dealt only with expanding the existing successful programmes. We are also introducing two new programmes. One is for young people entering employment for the first time. We have called it the new workers scheme.

The new workers scheme will provide a direct financial incentive for employers to recruit 18 to 20-year-olds by paying them a subsidy of £15 a week for 12 months. We have seen a steady fall in the rate of unemployment of young people under 18 over the past three years. We are anxious that employers should be able to offer inexperienced young people over 18 the jobs at the start of their career ladder that many need to start their working lives. We expect that no fewer than 70,000 young people will benefit from the scheme in its first year at a cost of some £25 million.

This scheme will build on the two-year YTS which is being launched in two weeks' time and which will provide quality training leading to recognised qualifications for 16 and 17-year-old school leavers. I hope — I repeat the sentiment with which I began—that we can all agree on the value of giving school leavers a better start in the world and better job prospects through YTS. I believe that the great majority of sensible people in industry are positively enthusiastic about our new scheme, which will be a permanent feature of training for work.

However, I noticed that, only last week, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East described the youth training scheme as a "skivvy" scheme. As I have said before, that was a ludicrously irresponsible way for a member of the shadow Cabinet to dismiss a new system of youth training supported by employers, trade unionists, the CBI and the TUC. The hon. Gentleman's view of the YTS is not shared by young people. We have carried out surveys to ascertain what young people think of the scheme. More than 1 million young people have entered the YTS since 1983. Our surveys show that 80 per cent. say that their training was worth while. Two thirds of YTS trainees get jobs immediately or move straight on to further education or other forms of training.

What the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East says is not just irresponsible or politically damaging to his party, although I believe it is certainly that — it is certainly damaging his credibility in the industrial world —but is positively damaging to the interests of the more gullible young people who are influenced by what he says. Calling YTS a "skivvy" scheme or "slave labour", or whatever the current cant phrase of the Labour Left maybe, has only one effect — to make some young people suspicious of YTS, to put them off joining it and, therefore, to make them miss out on an important chance of improving their job prospects. That is what the hon. Gentleman and the more Left-wing of his colleagues in the Labour party are doing and the sooner they realise it, the better.

Mr. Prescott: I am glad that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has got that off his chest. I said at the press conference I attended that many of the schemes under YTS are cheap, exploitive and skivvy schemes. *[Interruption.]* Another Minister asked me for evidence and I sent him parcels and papers — all the details. He left before saying whether he thought that I was right about private agencies. Many people are concerned about this matter. The Paymaster General has talked about industry's record. Its record in putting money into training is deplorable, as the Manpower Services Commission has shown in the piddling amount of money it put into training compared with our competitors.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman's second point was a good, hearty and virulent attack on something about which I was not speaking. I referred to his remarks about the two-year YTS and YTS. On the hon. Gentleman's first point, he knows perfectly well that we are describing the introduction of a two-year scheme which will provide for training provided by approved training agencies. Of course, in the early days, the training was less than satisfactory and, no doubt, there are still some cases in which we have not improved that position. Everyone in the CBI, the TUC and the MSC has striven to eliminate that unsatisfactory training. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East knows that the press conferences he gives turn into virulent attacks on YTS which deter young people who might otherwise take up this opportunity in April.

I shall at least give the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East credit for one thing: when he attacks YTS, or aspects of it, he seems to understand what he is attacking. He follows and studies his subject. Yesterday, I could not help noticing that the leader of the Liberal party, in introducing his ten-minute Bill, said:

> "I accept that the YTS is improving, but the process is painfully slow and it needs speeding up."—[*Official Report*, 19 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 302.]

I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman was seriously suggesting that the Liberal party could introduce a new, improved form of YTS before 1 April this year. I do not know whether he has tried telling employers, unions and managing agents, who, in my experience, are working flat out for the success of the new scheme, that progress is "painfully slow". The way in which the right hon. Gentleman introduced the Bill showed the pathetic irrelevance of the Liberal party to employment and training.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I assure the right hon. and learned Gentleman that I do not seek to intervene on behalf of the Liberal party. I should like to put to the right hon. and learned Gentleman the question I put to him before on the second year of YTS. Why does he not sort out properly the matter of the extra burden imposed by the present arrangements for the second year on local authorities, especially those that have given such great assistance in making the schemes work? Surely the right hon. and learned Gentleman would be very encouraging if he said that the whole of the extra cost would be borne by central Government and that local authorities, especially in areas of the highest unemployment, would not have to bear that extra burden.

Mr. Clarke: I have had a lengthy exchange on this matter before with the right hon. Gentleman. I am sure that he went back to his constituency and checked up on our exchanges. We have no shortage generally of the two-year places we require, which are provided by employers in the public sector and in the private sector who accept that, in

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the second year, they must pick up part of the burden. This reflects the fact that, in that second year, the trainees are undoubtedly giving added value to the employer. Local authorities are offering second-year places.

The local authorities that claim they are getting into most difficulty are those that are bowing to pressure from their branch of the National and Local Government Officers Association to top up the allowance payable to YTS trainees. That is a totally self-imposed burden chosen by local authorities and not one to which the Government could agree to divert funds from the mainstream of their training policies. I cannot understand why the local authority of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) has difficulties which other local authorities in equally hard-pressed areas do not have if it is paying the YTS allowance at the level accepted in the programmes generally.

Mr. Foot: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has got it wrong again. The same demand is faced by all the local authorities in our area — not just my local authority. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman look at the matter afresh and ascertain whether the whole of the extra cost in the second year can be borne by central Government rather than by the local authorities?

Mr. Clarke: I shall look again to ascertain whether all local authorities in south Wales are agreeing to NALGO's demands that they top up the YTS allowance to an unnecessary level. If that is not happening, I cannot understand why local authorities generally in the right hon. Gentleman's area cannot participate in the two-year YTS on the same basis as many other local authorities throughout the United Kingdom. I do not accept that this is a general problem which we are failing to tackle. I believe that, if local authorities, as private sector employment and voluntary bodies, continue to participate, we shall find that the two-year YTS is a desirable and permanent addition to the training and preparation for work of young people.

I began by describing the new workers scheme which will follow on from the two-year YTS. It is an extremely valuable addition to everything we are doing to continue to reduce unemployment among young people.

Our second new programme is a package of measures designed to help the long-term unemployed which we call our restart programme. Ever since we began to work together last autumn, my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment and I have become increasingly convinced that it is our duty to help those people who are in danger of completely falling out of the world of work. After a year or more of unemployment, despair and disillusion can set in in the mind of an unemployed person. Perversely, employers are reluctant to take on people who have no recent record of work to show that they can hold down a job and cope with the disciplines and pace of work. I have found in my contacts with my opposite numbers in the European Council of Ministers that the problem of long-term unemployment is an emerging problem in all our economies and is obviously one of the most important problems we should tackle.

Our plans, which we have carefully drawn up, are concerned with the social consequences of unemployment and the dignity of those seeking work as well as the creation of jobs. That approach underlines our ambitious plans to help the long-term unemployed. We have deliberately chosen to make a high priority of the 1·3 million people who have been registered as out of work for more than a year. We must not allow them to be left out of the better job market that economic recovery is producing.

We propose a person-to-person approach on an individual basis to each and every man and woman in the United Kingdom unemployed for more than a year.

Mr. Prescott: Tea and sympathy.

Mr. Clarke: It is ridiculous for the hon. Gentleman, before he has addressed himself to the details, to react in his typically aggressive way to the idea that we are turning our attention to the individual problems of more than 1 million people. If the hon. Gentleman will refrain from uttering his slogans for a minute and will follow the details, I shall challenge him to criticise our approach or to say in what way he would build on it. I cannot believe that the hon. Gentleman would scrap it, abandon it or seek to oppose it in any way.

Mr. Prescott: I do not oppose it.

Mr. Clarke: I have never before faced an hon. Member across the Dispatch Box who barracks so persistently on something which he then says he will not oppose.

Mr. Prescott: Anything which gives help or advice to the unemployed we will welcome. What the unemployed want after the advice is the jobs. There are 20 unemployed for every one vacancy the Government offer. All the right hon. and learned Gentleman can be offering is tea and sympathy, not a job.

Mr. Clarke: That is not true. If the hon. Gentleman will listen he will discover what we are talking about and what he is barracking.

He agrees with anything that offers individual support for the long-term unemployed. That involves a substantial effort when we are talking about 1·3 million people. Every one of those long-term unemployed will be invited, in the first place, to a discussion with an adviser in a jobcentre, who will consider the personal position and needs of each one. The discussion will determine which of a menu—for lack of a better phrase—of opportunities, some new and some already established, is most suitable for the person being helped. As I have already said, it is a massive undertaking, in organisational terms alone, to address ourselves to the individual position of well over 1 million people and offer them individual help. It amounts to a revolution in our approach to long-term unemployment.

Let me describe the process and see whether I can get more agreement not to oppose from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East. The jobcentres will take the initiative in calling in the long-term unemployed, every single one of them, by March of next year. We are recruiting 2,000 extra staff—an increase of nearly 25 per cent. on the staff in the jobcentres—to be able to offer the help I have described. Beyond the initial interview at the jobcentre, we are providing a whole range of courses and programmes designed to improve the chances of the long-term unemployed finding work.

In the first place, we are increasing the chances of their finding work by expanding the community programme to

a total of 255,000 places by the end of this year. That will mean that in a full year the community programme will be able to provide jobs for some 300,000 people.

Secondly, we are greatly extending the network of job clubs, which have a very impressive record in helping the long-term unemployed back into work. I do not think that the shadow Chancellor, who is not here today, altogether understands that. The shadow Chancellor said yesterday that job clubs were places where, as he understood it,

"young people come together and discuss why it is that they are out of work."—[*Official Report*, 19 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 307.]

That is absolute rubbish, and if that is his understanding, he should study the concept of job clubs more closely. Job clubs are places where long-term unemployed people of all ages come together for a minimum number of hours each week to be helped by a member of our staff in a sustained effort of job application, seeking every suitable advertised vacancy in the locality.

What was wrong with the figures of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East is that he talked only about vacancies in jobcentres, which are going up. As we all know, only a small proportion are ever notified to jobcentres in the first place. The job clubs actually help the people who participate to pursue not only jobcentre vacancies but all those advertised in the local newspapers. People are given the support of a member of staff in chasing all those jobs.

Job clubs are one of the most successful measures we have adopted. Contrary to what the shadow Chancellor appeared to assert, our records so far show that nearly two thirds of job club members have found work. If the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East or any other Opposition Member visits a job club he will find spectacular individual examples of people who have been out of work for some time who have been placed in jobs by this method.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is strange that in many areas employers are looking for people to work for them but cannot get the people they want with the right skills? Does he also agree that job clubs will be a great help in giving people advice as to what skills are needed in the market place and where they can go to be trained in those skills?

Mr. Clarke: That is the point of the initiative we are taking to provide individual advice for the long-term unemployed. I am working through what I have described as the menu of opportunities we offer. When some people discuss their individual situation it is found that they require training and that if they acquired some skills which were within their grasp they would be much more employable. Others are already equipped to find work but they are helped by a job club to find it.

Some people will be able to obtain help from other schemes we are extending, such as the new restart courses, which help people to brush up their job-finding skills. Many of the long-term unemployed are not good at presenting themselves and employers have something of a prejudice against the long-term unemployed, who they believe will not satisfactorily hold down a job.

Finally, over and above that, we are making a £20 a week job start allowance available nationally so as to provide a direct financial incentive to the long-term unemployed person to return to work, even if he has to take a lower paid job to get started again.

We have carefully tried out that package of measures. The programme we now call the restart programme was previously tried out in nine totally different towns as diverse as Crawley and Dundee. We have had no time to do a full academic study of the results because we are acting urgently and we want to crack on with tackling the problem. However, since we started our pilot schemes, we have noticed that while unemployment fell nationally in January — a bad month — by only 0·1 per cent., unemployment in our restart trial areas fell by 1·1 per cent. We have been carrying out much more detailed and sophisticated monitoring and what we have seen so far has given us confidence to go national in the restart programme.

I know what the Labour party's reaction is. It is wholly predictable, as it has been throughout the debate. It will say "That cannot be good enough; it does not cost enough." Anything in a Socialist programme has to cost a large amount of taxpayers' money. Even our moderate critics tend, as I said at the beginning of my speech, to talk of billions of pounds of public expenditure whenever they talk of unemployment in order to give more credibility to their proposals.

If I address the only coherent alternative to what we are putting forward, I suppose the most fashionable ingredient in every instant wonder cure for unemployment being peddled at the moment is increased spending on infrastructure. I have no intention of being totally hostile to spending on infrastructure when I am a member of Government who are already spending greatly increased amounts on the infrastructure. I played a part in restoring the trunk road programme and the hospital building programme, which had both been savaged by our Lib-Lab predecessors. New hospital building in particular had been axed by a third in 1976 by the people who are now converted to the wonders of infrastructure spending. Sweeping speeches about going further and thereby solving unemployment have to be examined with scepticism and care.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East has followed me in some of the things I have done in Government and Opposition. He and I have faced each other on other issues and he knows as well as I do, and should remember from personal experience, that on transport and health when we need to spend money, we spend it. Since 1979 we have increased capital spending in real terms, over and above inflation, on motorways and trunk roads by almost one quarter. Spending on motorway and trunk road repairs has increased by 100 per cent. in real terms since 1979. I am working through the list of items that have appeared in the speeches of Labour Members. I have not noticed that they have omitted roads. The alliance always mentions roads, as does the Labour party. We have spent 16 per cent. more in real terms on hospitals since 1979.

The problem that arises in those areas and that makes such a nonsense of the Opposition's sweeping assertions is often one of delays to projects rather than unwillingness to spend money to meet real needs. It typically takes 10 years to build a road, from its planning stage, and 15 years for a hospital. Personally, I trust that my successors at the Department of Health and Social Security are tackling that with the same vigour as I was trying to, because those lead times would be regarded as ludicrous in any private sector schemes. However, the delays are caused by public inquiries and bureaucracy. They are more of an enemy to

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the infrastructure in those areas than tight money or lack of financing. That is relevant to our debate. Those problems have to be borne in mind. That is why claims to boost infrastructure spending are often impracticable as well as unnecessary.

The real problem is that modern construction methods are capital intensive, not labour intensive. Person-to-person service industries are the labour intensive activities in a modern economy, not public works. Capital programmes that are perfectly desirable in themselves to cut out transport costs and improve our environment are fairly useless when looked at as special measures to assist the unemployed.

Arguments are advanced about all the unemployed building workers. The Opposition are being converted. At one time they listed sewers. This is the daftest example of all to give when seeking to suggest that increased spending on the infrastructure will produce more jobs. The Opposition are now talking only about housing. That, at least, has narrowed the scope. Modern tunnelling methods mean that the number of men who are required to build sewers is tiny. It is good to build sewers to prevent holes appearing in roads but, as a special measure in itself, it is not a good way of trying to put the unemployed back to work. Even the favourite arguments about all the unemployed building workers — those who might be employed in housing—are hard to sustain in many parts of the country. This has relevance even to those who say that housing is the main method of boosting employment. I have read a recent report of the Federation of Master Builders. It is headed "Work goes begging as firms struggle to get craftsmen."

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way in a moment. The hon. Gentleman's alternative budget will rely heavily upon sudden boosts to infrastructure spending to create jobs.

Mr. Wrigglesworth *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: Let the hon. Gentleman listen to this quotation from the magazine *Building* of 7 March 1986 and then I shall give way. It is based on a report of the Federation of Master Builders. It says:

"Small and medium-sized firms affiliated to the Federation of Master Builders are reporting labour shortages throughout the country. Some companies are turning down work because of the unfilled vacancies, which are blamed mainly on poor training. A survey carried out by the Federation of Master Builders shows that 39 per cent. of the 528 member firms who responded are suffering skills shortages even in areas of high unemployment. London is worst hit with 53 per cent. of firms short of manpower."

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I trust that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) will make a speech during the course of the Budget debate. He has tried to intervene in every Budget speech that I have listened to so far.

Mr. Straw: What are the skillcentres doing?

Mr. Clarke: Before the hon. Gentleman makes his speech, he ought to consider the fact that the number of people who are being trained in skillcentres has greatly increased during the last 12 months. Let me continue my quotation, and then I shall give way either to the hon. Member for Blackburn or to the hon. Member for Stockton, South, if either of those Members is prepared to stand up. The following quotation is also relevant. It says:

"In addition, 14 per cent. of firms reporting labour shortages could not find general operatives, despite the high number of labourers registered as unemployed. The overwhelming majority, some 74 per cent. have been unable to fill job vacancies for six months or more, according to the report, with 60 per cent. being 'limited in the workload they could take on as a consequence'. Many firms wanted to employ direct labour but found that the growth of the black economy and the number of self-employed tradesmen prevented 34 per cent. of firms from doing so."

Relevant lessons are to be drawn from that. I agree with the quotation given by the federation's national director, Bill Hilton, at the end of the report. He said:

"The report's findings prove that we have to do far more to encourage carpenters, bricklayers and other skills into the industry. There are lessons for the Government and the industry."

But there is also a lesson for the Opposition that is relevant to this debate. When they put forward alternative budgets they claim that increased, instant spending will increase the number of jobs. However, those who are seeking workers cannot find labour. Most of the claims in the alternative budgets of the Labour, Liberal and Social Democratic parties that millions of pounds of new building work would take thousands of building workers off the dole are not sustainable.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: It is remarkable that the organisation upon which the Paymaster General relies for this report also spends a considerable amount of time pressing the alliance and others to increase expenditure in the very areas that he has decried. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that our budget proposals both for last year and this year do not rely entirely, as he seeks to suggest, upon massively increased spending on capital projects? They include a spread of proposals, including education and training in particular, to ensure that the skill shortages in my area, about which many complaints are made, do not exist in the future.

Mr. Clarke: I shall try to refer to as many ingredients as possible in the alleged alternative budget, but I am now dealing with the Government's Budget. If the hon. Gentleman says that the Federation of Master Builders has lobbied his party for increased spending on the building, I can believe it. He has been in politics long enough to know that most of those who come along to lobby do so because they want the amount of building to be increased in their area. My point is that the experiene of the Federation of Master Builders is that they are turning away work because they cannot recruit labour, including unskilled labour. Therefore, we have to address that problem before that ingredient of the hon. Gentleman's policies, which he says would increase jobs, can be sustained.

Mr. Bob Edwards (Wolverhampton, South-East): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way in a minute. After I have dealt with training, I shall listen to what the hon. Gentleman has to say.

Of course there is a training problem. That is why we are putting so much effort into training. Recently I visited the new training complex of the Construction Industry Training Board at Bircham Newton. The CITB is the major agency for providing youth training scheme places. It has provided 18,000 training places for young people,

and next year it will be taking full advantage of the Government's new programme of two-year training. No doubt the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East will continue to try to put young people off taking advantage of those training schemes by attacking them as "skivvy" schemes.

Mr. Prescott: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is introducing a great deal of confusion into the debate. The Government have abolished 16 of the 23 industrial training boards. The Construction Industry Training Board is one of the few that remains. In that sense, there is control by industry, employers and unions over the introduction of a proper degree of training into the youth training scheme. I fully endorse and accept that point, but that is not the experience in the majority of youth training schemes.

Mr. Clarke: I repeat what I said earlier—that we are concentrating upon improving the quality of the training that is provided in the youth training schemes. Mistakes were no doubt made during the early days of the YTS. Everybody is now concentrating upon providing good quality, two-year training from 1 April next. Substantial changes are being made. From 1 April, those who provide places will have to be approved training agencies. However, that does not appear to be leading to any abatement of the hon. Gentleman's attacks upon the scheme. I believe that it should. The way in which he attacks the scheme is clearly designed to put off young people. He is playing up to the audience behind him, which he knows contains—[HON. MEMBERS: "Not so much of an audience."] No. We keep returning to the same point.

We are told that that infrastructure spending is the main alternative. When one looks at the alliance alternatives, one finds that substantial reliance is placed on the community programme. I looked carefully at the alliance's alternative budget to try to find out where the large number of jobs that they claimed would be created could be found. I found that those which had any credibility were boosted significantly by taking the target that we had announced before the budget of 230,000 places and calmly doubling it to 460,000. I take that imitation as a compliment. The alliance has slipped into its policy a calm invitation to increase the successful community programme that this Government have already launched. We have been expanding it flat out, to the limits of what is practicable.

We have to improve the quality of the work that is being provided in the community programme. It has to be of real quality for those who are engaged in the community programme so that at the end of 12 months they can demonstrate that they have done a worthwhile job that involves real work disciplines. It also has to be of value to the community as a whole. That is why we are devising schemes of crime prevention by putting in locks and similar equipment for elderly people and of energy conservation by insulating the homes of elderly people. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is preparing a programme of schemes relating to the environment, as is my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to help farming in rural areas. This will involve over 250,000 people at any one time in schemes of real quality.

To put together an alternative budget, all the alliance can do is pluck a figure out of the air and claim that it can double the whole programme to a little less than 500,000 people, and I have to say that we would be back to counting lamp posts if we tried to expand to that degree and at that level. It may make a good speech, but it does not make any more credible a policy for unemployment, any more than does asserting that infrastructure spending of one kind or another—even on housing, which the Opposition appear to accept is the only one worth arguing—can make a substantial contribution to the number of jobs that it is claimed will be achieved if these alternative policies are implemented.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): The other day I was talking to a bricklayer who was working near my home. He has come from Glasgow to work in the south because he cannot get employment in his trade in Glasgow. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has given these bland assurances that building employers cannot get skilled workers, but is there not something wrong with the structure? Is it a fact that skilled building workers cannot get work in the north and come to the south in search of it? Is that what is going on and, if so, to what extent is it going on?

Mr. Clarke: I find that astonishing, first, because, when one visits Glasgow, one sees an extensive amount of rebuilding going on, particularly in east Glasgow. Secondly, according to the claims of the Federation of Master Builders, in the north, which in its submission includes the whole of Scotland and a bit of northern England as well, 20 per cent. of firms were reporting shortages of labour while in London 53 per cent. of employers were reporting difficulty in finding labour. If a bricklayer is skilled and produces work of quality, he ought to be able to find a job. That is why we concentrate so much on building up the amount of training that is given to bricklayers.

I have spent some time setting out our employment propositions in the programme we put together, which was announced in the Budget of my right hon. Friend. I think that the full extent of it has not yet been appreciated, but it will be as we start to tackle the problems of the long-term unemployed and the need for training throughout the country.

I will not spend much more time on the policies of the Opposition because I think that, on the whole, they exist in speeches rather than in reality.

We heard yesterday from the shadow Chancellor that he is no longer into big spending. He is indignant about the Chief Secretary's attacks on his £24 billion programme, which the shadow Chancellor combines with a clear commitment not to raise the basic rate of income tax and an apparent determination——

Mr. Prescott: He withdrew it last night.

Mr. Clarke: No, he did not. The shadow Chancellor is indignantly trying to refute the £24 billion. My right hon. Friend's answer was quite clear. He said that he had looked at the figures and was prepared to reduce one and increase another on what the Labour party keeps saying. The shadow Chancellor combines this with a commitment, that I have heard him make twice, that he will not raise the basic rate of income tax and an apparent determination not to oppose our 1p reduction in the basic rate.

If the shadow Chancellor and his right hon. and hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench seek to assert that

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£24 billion is not the case, I cannot help thinking, as I did yesterday, that I hope they have had a word with the shadow spokesmen on social services, on education and on health who have been going round the country showering promises like confetti—*[Interruption.]* It is interesting to note that the shadow Chancellor will apparently say no to all those proposals that have been made by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and others of his hon. Friends.

As the Opposition clearly do not like what I am describing of their programme, let me give my understanding of what the scaled-down programme amounts to. The shadow Chancellor has now come down from the giddy heights of £24 billion towards the lower foothills of £6 billion or £7 billion. Half of what he describes as a "drive to create jobs" came from a straightforward addition to what he previously said regarding the recent Select Committee report. He added that £3·3 billion would produce 750,000 jobs as a result of adopting the Select Committee report. As shadow Chancellor, he ought to know that the gross cost of the Select Committee's proposals is at least £6 billion. The one-year jobs in the building industry and the one-year jobs in the Health Service proposed by the Select Committee merely repeat and do not add to the shadow Chancellor's other proposals, as he implied in his speech yesterday. He has taken on a new commitment to a £40 per week subsidy to the employer for every long-term unemployed person taken on, without any ceiling on the pay of that person. I can only say that that would displace thousands of people from their jobs if it were adopted as a general proposition.

I do not know—no doubt another spokesman will explain to the House—whether the shadow Chancellor is now taking on hook, line and sinker the Select Committee proposals, as appeared likely, only a few weeks after they came out without any further examination. The fact that he seems to have done so is a surprise to me. Alternatively, does his throw-away line yesterday suggest that, until the Select Committee came along with its report, he was desperately short of any employment policy? There must be a purpose in measures to help the unemployed, and that is what is plainly lacking in the right hon. Gentleman's plans.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): I suspect that the Government also are desperately short of an employment policy, and I would be pleased if they took on board the Select Committee's report. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman guarantee to use his influence to ensure that there is a proper debate in the House on the report of the Select Committee?

Mr. Clarke: If the "drive to create jobs" now comprises the main part of the Opposition's policy, no doubt there will be rather more frequent opportunities to debate that.

It has been suggested that I should leave the Opposition to speak for their own policies. I therefore look forward to hearing the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East describe his party's commitments to reducing unemployment after he finishes what will no doubt be his inevitable denigration of the measures that I have announced.

I will be fair to the hon. Gentleman. He can sometimes be a very reponsible politician. Not for him the reckless protestations of the shadow Chancellor, who a few weeks ago exhorted all local authorities to get their plans ready for an orgy of capital spending in the event of a Labour Government getting back. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East spoke to a fringe meeting on 7 February at the Labour local government conference at Norwich, where he was candid and frank, as he often is. I have made inquiries of those responsible, and I am assured that the *Municipal Journal* of 7 February 1986 reported him accurately. It certainly looks authentic, and it was his usual forthright stuff to Labour Councillors. I will quote verbatim that report. It refers to him as the Labour spokesman on regional affairs, which is probably a reflection on the hon. Gentleman's spokesmanship on employment. It said:

> "'Central Government cannot be indifferent to the way you spend your money' he told delegates. 'And we must start spelling out exactly what we are going to do instead of simply issuing slogans to win power.' He turned to Neil Kinnock. 'How did we get this promise of one million jobs? Who worked on the programme? Promises such as these simply label us with targets we cannot achieve and expose our credibility'."

That is good forthright stuff, and in a moment I will allow the hon. Gentleman to start spelling out his programme. The time has come for the hon. Gentleman to start trying to do something about the tattered credibility of the Labour party. I do not envy him his task in answering a Budget which is based on an excellent economic outlook and which contains extremely worthwhile tax changes and most significant and ambitious employment measures aimed in particular at the young and the long-term unemployed. Neither I nor most of the public believe that he can improve on it. I shall follow with care every word he says as he tries to prove that 1 million new jobs could be created by the proposals he and the shadow Chancellor have been putting out.

4.50 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): The Paymaster General spoke for a long time, but not one extra job will come out of the policy about which he talked. It is caring capitalism, the people's capitalism offering tea and sympathy instead of jobs. The argument of my right hon. and hon. Friends is not against giving counsel and offering schemes to small businesses and big businesses. We want jobs from wherever they may come. We have no ideological obsession whether jobs come from the private or the public sector or about what advice we give. We fully support local authorities, particularly Labour authorities and the metropolitan county councils which are being abolished, which have done much to produce jobs by using both public and private money. Hon. Members should not be in any doubt about our endorsement of any economic activity which creates jobs.

In regard to the quotation made by the Paymaster General at the end of his speech, the fact that the *Municipal Journal* got the wrong title for me calls into question the accuracy of the report. I do not deny that I said it is not good enough simply to repeat a slogan about 1 million jobs and hope that people will believe it; we are obliged to spell out precisely where the jobs will come from and the consequential effects on inflation, on the balance of payments and on borrowing. We must face the facts straight. If we do not, the electorate will not believe us. We do not need lectures, such as the Paymaster General's speech, about what we should do.

Central Government have taken it upon themselves to say that the reduction in unemployment is a central feature of Labour party policy. In the first two years of a Labour Government we would look to local authorities to play a major part in the public expenditure role. But we cannot be indifferent to how local authorities spend the money if we want to get the maximum number of jobs. That is a central point for anyone who wishes to work with local authorities in achieving the objective of 1 million jobs.

We shall spell out in detail where the jobs will come from. Yesterday my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), the shadow Chancellor, started to identify the areas in which jobs would be created. More work is being done on the policies. The programme will be published in detail within 12 months in time for the next election. The Government can tell us then why they will not spend money on those areas. It is not just Labour Members who say that the Government could use public expenditure to create jobs; many of the Paymaster General's hon. Friends have been saying that for some time.

When the right hon. and learned Gentleman was in the Tory Reform Group that is precisely what he used to say. I assume that he is still a member of that group, which gave the following advice to the Chancellor:

"We believe that any extra resources should be used to cut unemployment by spending on direct job creation through essential public investment and measures such as we discuss below."

On the front of the document is the name of the Paymaster General.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Not as an author.

Mr. Prescott: The right hon. and learned Gentleman may not be an author, but I notice that every one of the authors comes from the Conservative party research department. If the Paymaster General wants not to endorse the document, but just to sponsor it, then, to avoid embarrassment with his hon. Friends, he should withdraw his name from the endorsement of that policy. I shall give him the opportunity now to disown it.

Mr. Clarke: As the hon. Gentleman has just denounced the accuracy of the *Municipal Journal* and then repeated just about every word he was reported as having said, he should cease taking what appear to be good points from the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), who first discovered this pamphlet. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the front page, he will see a list of patrons of the Tory Reform Group, which includes the deputy Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) and other people. It is plain that we are not the authors of the document. I am proud to be a patron of the Tory Reform Group, but I do not agree with each and every word that it publishes, nor does every other member of the group.

Mr. Prescott: The Paymaster General has earned his title as one who deals more in tea and sympathy than in hard, concrete facts about what he is prepared to do for jobs. I accept that he does not endorse the policy of using public expenditure as a way of creating employment. We accept that that is not his view, or the view of the Government.

When the Paymaster General talked about local authority enterprise and community schemes, he was asked about training schemes run by local authorities. Local authorities are in doubt about maintaining good quality training under the youth training scheme because they are in difficulty through rate capping in financing schemes on a two-year basis. When the Government talk about local authorities using public expenditure to create jobs, they should remember that local authorities have been penalised by the loss of £16 billion of rate support grant, which in itself has created much unemployment.

On local authority financing we see in the Red Book that a further £2 billion burden is to be placed on ratepayers by the Government's financial proposals. That will undoubtedly cause further problems for local authority employment units and development bodies which have been creating jobs by using public and private capital, taking advice and introducing enterprise schemes.

I do not oppose business schemes, community schemes, YTS and counselling as a contribution to overcoming difficulties. My main charge against the Paymaster General is that he is misleading people because there is no prospect of his providing them with jobs. I accept that the long-term unemployed need advice and that they can get a good deal of help. I visit many jobcentres, job clubs, and so on, and talk to the people. I am not embarrassed about admitting that. I welcome the help that is being given to the long-term unemployed, but the main question we ask is whether the Government can provide them with jobs.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Given that we all share the hon. Gentleman's views on YTS and hope that local authorities will participate in it in future, may I ask the hon. Gentleman whether he agrees that the financial pressure on local authorities is often as much of their own making as of anyone else's? Does he agree that it would be more appropriate for local authorities to spend money on YTS rather than on nuclear-free zones or on give-away newspapers and propaganda? Does he agree that that would be a better priority?

Mr. Prescott: The hon. Gentleman is establishing a reputation for asking questions which are totally irrelevant to the point before the House. When local authorities have lost £16 billion from their rate support grant — a phenomenal amount of money — it is more relevant to point that out not just to Labour councils but to Tory councils, which have also been heavily penalised. We must remember that the loss of that money has affected training and employment. The Government are determined to pursue that policy, which is designed to create more unemployment, not jobs, although the Paymaster General says that he is concerned about job creation.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: If the hon. Gentleman takes as long as I did to make a speech, it will be because he has given way as often as I did. He said a moment ago that he was not opposed to counselling and that he supported job clubs. Does he recall listening with me yesterday to the shadow Chancellor saying that

"the scheme for identifying the long-term unemployed and giving them counselling and help is not only deeply patronising to the long-term unemployed, but demonstrates a deep ignorance of the problem"?

The hon. Gentleman described job clubs as places

"where, as I understand it, young people come together and discuss why it is that they are out of work." — [*Official Report*, 19 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 306-7.]

Would the hon. Gentleman confirm that, 24 hours later, he refuted both those statements?

Mr. Prescott: The Paymaster General has a reputation for being considerably sharper than that small point shows. He was put into that job to give it a liberal face and to put sharpness into it. He is not doing very well at the moment.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook and I have discussed our experiences when we visited jobcentres. We do not enter into criticism without getting some assessment and feedback. The job club scheme implies counselling the unemployed on how to get a job because many do not know how to write or to present themselves properly. That is an insult to many unemployed, who have previously been unemployed under a Labour Government when unemployment was 1·2 million. Two million more of these workers were then in work. They do not need any advice on how to get a job. They just want to get a job. That is what my right hon. Friend was concerned about when he made that point.

This Budget debate shows the kind of different reactions that we have seen in the press. I was looking at some of the quotes and newspaper reactions to the Budget. The *Daily Mail* says that

"the Chancellor made a tasty Budget out of the scraps."

The *Daily Express* referred to a

"a Budget for a brave future."

The *Daily Telegraph* said it was "ingenious". I do not read *The Times* and *The Sun*, and nor should anyone else. The intellectual paper, *The Guardian*—I rather like this quote—said:

"All the basic problems that Mr. Lawson has inherited remain to haunt future administrations — appalling infrastructure, desperate housing conditions, low manufacturing investments, a withering technological base, a growing army of disenfranchised poor and unemployed. Yesterday's performance, for all its clever shifts and bright notions, did not even begin to address that grim and growing legacy."

When the Chancellor was faced with that quote on the "Today" programme, he said that it was "typical *Guardian* rubbish", or words to that effect. It was pointed out that the *Financial Times* editorial was similar.

There are two different views about this Budget. This is the first time that any Government have clearly rejected the idea of doing anything about reducing mass unemployment. It is the first time that they have given any sign that unemployment is not an electoral liability. They feel that it is far better to operate on tax than on the level of unemployment, and they are morally indifferent as to what is going to be the level of unemployment at the next election. That is one heck of a kick in the teeth for the unemployed.

Another reaction is that it is clearly a money Budget. Anyone who has any doubt has only to see the reaction of Conservative Back Benchers. Whenever money was being doled out, there were cheers and the waving of Order Papers, and suggestions that we cheer. There was not one murmur when we whizzed through the special employment package. Nobody knew that it had been done. I almost shouted, "Where is the beef?"

There was then a press conference the next day for the three-pronged attack by Lord Young—that amateur in the other place — and the Paymaster General to announce their new approach to unemployment. It clearly is a money Budget. My right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook pointed out that the rich will pay less, and the rest will pay more. It is true. That is precisely what came out of that Budget. He showed that a family on £5,000 a year gets 26 pence a week back. A family on £50,000 a year gets £3.30 a week back, which is even proportionately higher in relation to the income that they earn. When one considers that those earning £50,000 a year actually have received £1 billion in tax since 1979, and are still getting it fed down their throats, that is highly offensive to the 3 million or 4 million unemployed. The money that was given in stamp duty and other capital transfer stamps is twice as much as the amount of money that Lord Young persuaded the Chancellor to give towards these tea and sympathy measures that the Paymaster General has been talking about.

I think the one condemnation of this Budget is that it seems that the Government are prepared to borrow. I did not see anyone protest when my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition made the point that this Government have borrowed more than the Labour Government in their five years. We are actually borrowing to pay tax, but apparently it is evil to borrow to put people back into work. That is what this Budget is telling us. It is significant that this Budget does not mention anything about solving unemployment as an objective policy.

I looked back on some of the speeches that had been made in previous Budget debates, and I should like to remind the House of what was said. We have had six or seven years of this Government's policies, and we can now assume that they have had a chance to work in some form.

In the first Budget of March 1980 there were 1·3 million unemployed. The Chancellor at that time said:

"These are realistic policies, to which there is no alternative."—[*Official Report*, 26 March 1980, Vol. 981, c. 1489.]

By March 1981, and the next Budget, unemployment went up by 957,000 to 2·3 million. The Chancellor stated:

"Unemployment may be slowing down."—[*Official Report*, 10 March 1981, Vol. 1000, c. 757.]

Then in November 1981, we had the first fiddle which reduced the unemployment figures by 37,000. That made no difference. Unemployment, by the next Budget in March 1982, had gone up by nearly 500,000 to 2·8 million. The Chancellor then stated:

"I have a Budget for industry, and so it is a Budget for jobs."—[*Official Report*, 9 March 1982; Vol. 19, c. 727.]

We got the second fiddle in October 1982, which took a further 190,000 off the figures. By March 1983 unemployment went up by 351,000 to 3·1 million, and the Chancellor said:

"It is a Budget for recovery."—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1983; Vol. 39, c. 157.]

By April 1983 we had entered into another further fiddle —160,000 taken off our unemployed figures.

By March 1984—the Budget that was known as the "Budget for jobs" — unemployment had fallen by 29,000. The curious thing about that was that the only time unemployment fell in this country was in the period between the end of one Parliament and the election of another, because the Government pumped a bit of money into the economy and told local authorities, "Go out and spend, quick." They said, "Spend on housing" — no problems with skilled labour.

We then had a new Chancellor, and he said that the Government would assist in the creation of jobs. Well, they got into creating in the "Budget for jobs," and we find in March 1985 that unemployment had gone up by 125,000. By February 1986 it had gone up another 114,000, and the Chancellor told us yesterday of a further substantial range of measures to help the unemployed. I do not think that those are many of the sort of things that the Paymaster General talked about, unless it is the tea and sympathy jobs—not jobs.

As Lord Young said in an interview last night, the purpose of these measures is to show that the Government have not forgotten the long-term unemployed. They have not; they have invited them for a cup of tea and a chat. But the long-term unemployed cannot get jobs. There are no jobs in any of these proposals. The only jobs in these proposals are the 2,000 jobcentre workers who are going to interview the unemployed, and I welcome that. At least it is an increase in jobs. It is also an increase in bureaucracy in the Civil Service, which this Government have spent an awful lot of time proudly reducing.

The record shows the latest little bit of a fiddle. The Paymaster General exclaimed with great indignation when we called it a fiddle, although he knows it to be a fiddle. When he adds the self-employed to these figures—a method that has not been used in Europe—by June he will be able to show that the percentage of unemployed, such as the figure of 14·1 per cent. in January, is reduced to something like 12·9 per cent. We shall see a remarkable turn around in the June figures due to the Government's fiddling—loading up the total amount of people in work and reducing the number of unemployed by using different calculations.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We made one change simply to correct an error, and I am pleased to hear that the hon. Gentleman is not attacking that. As to the rate of unemployment, does he agree that what we mean by that is a comparison between the number of those out of work and seeking work and the total numbers of the work force? Is he still on to the argument that the self-employed should not count as part of the work force? Does he not think that people working on their own account are in work?

Mr. Prescott: No, we cannot ignore the self-employed. However, this is the eighteenth change of the figures, and they are all designed to do one thing—reduce the figures of unemployed. The Paymaster General should stick with me and think it through. If he adds the self-employed to the total employed labour force and divides it by the same set of unemployed figures, he will get a different, reduced percentage.

Mr. Clarke: More accurate.

Mr. Prescott: I am all for having accurate statistics, and I am not in doubt about them. When I was asked on television whether I would change the system, I said that I would look at the evidence and make a judgment. I can understand that the self-employed should be included. However, my judgment is that the Government spend all their time looking for ways to reduce the unemployed figures by fiddling them down.

Let us get a comparison with full-time equivalents, because the Government's only claim is based on part-time jobs, which form two thirds of the increase in jobs. The Bank of England and the Library have done the calculations with full-time figures. Unfortunately, when I asked the Paymaster General for an answer on this, he said that the Department could not deal with the problem because there was too much detail. If he has the statistics from the Library, why does he not get his computers working?

If the Paymaster General takes full-time equivalents now compared with 1979, which is a matter of record, he will find that full-time equivalents have gone down to about 2·1 million. The Bank of England looked at this assessment and averaged what the increase in full-time equivalents has been, on that basis, from 1983 to 1985. The figure is about 24,000, as I think the Paymaster General is aware. That is about 12,000 a year on the balance of full-time equivalents. I asked the Library how long it would take us to reach the level of full-time equivalents of 1979 on the rate of increase that the Government have proudly put forward. The answer was 1,875 years.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman cannot make his attacks on fiddling the figures and then start using an ingenuity that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) would envy. Since 1983, the last election, over 700,000 people have gone into new employment. The hon. Gentleman is talking it all down, not least of all by leaving out all the self-employed again. There is a huge growth in self-employment, and the hon. Gentleman is betraying what I have already said is the prejudice of the Labour movement by leaving the self-employed out of the calculation.

Mr. Prescott: I shall not pursue too far the point about the self-employed.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman is ducking the point.

Mr. Prescott: I am not ducking it, because I have not looked at it. The assessment made of the self-employed in the labour force surveys operates in a different way from when the Labour Administration were in power. If we asked that question, we should probably want to consider that possibility. I am not worried about that. However, if the Government want to compare their record on unemployment with that of the Labour Government, the records should at least be compared on the same basis so that we can get a fair judgment of where the Government's policies have been more successful. As I recall, the poster that the Government used in the 1979 election showed queues of people and said "Labour isn't working." Unemployment has gone up by 2·5 million since then, we have not heard a murmur from the Government, and the Budget is not doing anything to help.

The Government are also trying to manipulate the situation. They are trying to put a gloss on caring capitalism. Lord Young was appointed to his job to improve the image. We know how he does that. He gets out a calculator and fiddles the figures down, an then hires a PR agency for £1·5 million to tell us how daring the Government are and what they are doing to help the long-term unemployed. He is using the taxpayers' money for Tory propaganda about the Government's policy, which is what they do not want local authorities to do.

That is not acceptable, and the electorate are rumbling the Government. Why are we worried whether the figure is 3·2 million, 3·4 million, 4 million or 4·2 million? The reality is that the trend is inevitably up. The figure is expressed in millions of people unemployed.

Mr. Clarke: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is on safe ground in asserting that the present trend in unemployment is up. He is drawing comparisions by going back to 1979. All our critics do that, but they take in the worst period of the recession, which was from 1979 to 1981. We have now had four or five years of sustained growth in the economy and we are rapidly creating new jobs. To go back to 1979 is to exaggerate the analogy. The hon. Gentleman cannot assert, on the basis of what I admit

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are somewhat perplexing figures over the past few months, that we are on a rising trend of unemployment. He has no basis for asserting that.

Mr. Prescott: Does the Paymaster General spend any time looking at the figures? I can give him two from his Department. Unemployment in March 1984 was 3·1 million. Will he accept that proposition? They are figures from his Department, so I assure him that they come from a good source. In February 1986, the figure had gone up to 3·382 million. I am not a clever kid on figures, but that is an increase of nearly 250,000 people on the unemployment list.

Through the post I received a document from the Paymaster General's Department. It says at the top:

"Restricted to Ministers for Question Time."

It is about the latest unemployment figures, and the Minister's civil servants have advised:

"Unemployment is 3·2 million. If asked, that is the smallest increase since November 1985."

That is good propaganda, but it goes on to say:

"The total is the highest recorded since seasonally adjusted figures started in 1948."

I did not hear that from the Dispatch Box in the last Employment Question Time. The document is full of good stuff which I shall use on other occasions.

Unemployment is higher now than it was in the 1930s, but in the 1930s it continued to go up for only four years at a run. I hope that the Minister will not deny those figures. In the 1980s, under this Government, unemployment figures have gone up every year for six years. My charge is not that the Government have made a mess of it, but that it is a deliberate act of the Government to maintain unemployment as part of their policy. There has never been any doubt about that. I shall not again weary the House with the figures for OECD countries and what happened under previous Tory and Labour Administrations, but the evidence is clear. It may be that people have been shaken out, as the Prime Minister suggested, but undoubtedly Government policy had a greater effect than any world recession on the nature of unemployment in the British economy. To that extent, the Budget, by giving money in tax cuts, confirmed that the Government were not prepared to give it for jobs.

We are always hearing arguments about how many jobs can be bought for £1 billion of borrowing. It is generally agreed that fewer jobs are obtained by taking 1p off tax than by putting the money into public infrastructure. Indeed—I am sure that the Minister will agree—more people can be taken off the unemployment register by producing cheapie schemes, such as the youth training scheme, community programmes, and so on. In fact, one of the conditions of going on those programmes is that a person is registered as unemployed. It is to get people off the unemployment register that those schemes are provided. What the Government chose to do in the Budget was to go for tax cuts and a lot of cheapie schemes, because that, basically, is what they boil down to.

I must make clear again my attitude to community programmes, YTS, and other such schemes. There is definitely a role for them in order to bring about a full employment economy. We are not going to produce 4 million jobs on a 40-hour week basis. Those days are gone. We have got to find all sorts of ways in which we can give the opportunity to all in our society to make a useful contribution. Community programmes are clearly one such way, and they are here to stay, as is the YTS. My attacks on these programmes relate to the Government's using them simply to manipulate the unemployment figures and to avoid doing anything themselves about providing jobs.

The Minister says that he does not agree with the Tory reform package. I can only say that I wish that he had shown more consideration to the report of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton). The Select Committee on Employment is made up of hon. Members from both sides of the House. That report was rubbished in a press release within an hour of its coming off the press. Any hon. Member who cares to refer to the evidence will see the following:

"We released it at 11 o'clock, we then had a Press conference at 12 o'clock and one of the journalists who came along at 12 o'clock had in his pocket what he called a Department of Employment Press release which pretty comprehensively savaged and denounced the whole report."

That is the sort of attention that the Paymaster General gives to the serious attempt of hon. Members on both sides of the House to do something about unemployment.

My main objection to the Government's policy—this enterprise culture, this desire to give incentives and to vamp up profits—is that I believe it to have failed. The Government seem to believe that if people are given incentives and companies are given more profits, what the Chancellor calls the engine of growth will get going—the engine of capitalism, reinvestment and the provision of jobs.

If we look at the proportion of net domestic product that went to profits between 1979 and 1984 we find that it increased from 9·1 per cent. to 14·9 per cent.—a 6 per cent. increase, which is equivalent to £14 billion. What did they do with that £14 billion? They did not put it into investment. We have heard throughout these debates that investment has been lower in manufacturing.

When I was doing research for this speech, one thing that really struck me was something that the Prime Minister said when she was Leader of the Opposition. Talking about manufacturing industry, she said:

"On the economic side, we have to break through the prosperity barrier in manufacturing industry." — [*Official Report*, 28 March 1979; Vol. 965, c. 468.]

The right hon. Lady not only broke through barriers, but she smashed down manufacturing industry, with investment, output and trade deficit all worse than in 1979.

When we look at what happened to the £14 billion, we see that it did not go into investment, training or research and development. As the previous Tory Prime Minister found out, despite all the incentives, money was not put into investment or jobs. It was put into property in New York, it was put into investment abroad, so that, as the Chancellor says, we can live in the future, when we have not got oil money, on all the money coming back from those investments. But it is at the cost of the collapse of our manufacturing industry and the loss of the jobs associated with it.

When I hear talk in this debate about training, I must say that industry has no room to criticise what the Government do about training. It was this Government who got rid of 16 of the 23 industrial training boards. It was this Government who got rid of the levies. The one thing that is claimed to be a success—YTS—is one of the industrial training boards that survived — the construction training board.

We are told from the Dispatch Box that we are short of all kinds of skills. Not only were the industrial training boards closed, but the Government closed the skillcentres, as the Minister said, because they deal with the traditional skills such as plastering, bricklaying, and other such jobs. That is what the Government have done about training.

When representatives of industry say that they are short of skilled workers, I ask them how much they take from their pockets to put towards training. They pay very little. It is scandalous how little they are doing about training. Most of industry is using the YTS to finance its apprenticeship programmes in the early stages; it does not even pay for its apprenticeship schemes.

I have an advertisement here which I find most insulting. It reads:

"Here comes Spikey Dodds. Watch out Japan."

There is no doubt about what Japan does for its youngsters in education, making resources available, planning five-year training programmes and ensuring the acquisition of qualifications. Anybody who thinks that Spikey Dodds, after a two-year YTS scheme, is going to threaten Japan, Germany or America must be living in cloud-cuckoo-land. We are kidding ourselves if we believe that that is training for our youngsters, and we cannot maintain an industrialised economy without the skills necessary for a developed economy.

Even under the training boards we did not do enough training, but to dismantle them was criminal. The Government used the defence that with the training boards manpower got more places. Yes — they put the instructors on bikes to cycle round the factories. We do not do enough by way of training, and it is at the cost of our contribution to the industrialisation of the economy of this country. We see the kind of public relations stuff coming out from Saatchi and Saatchi. They do all right on it, but it is another example of tea and sympathy. It does not address itself to the real problem.

I therefore want to know where all the money went. A lot of it undoubtedly went abroad. That is the reason why we talk about a national investment bank. But an awful lot went in increased dividends, which went up 68 per cent. between 1981 and 1984 in real terms. In 1984 top salaries went up by 16 per cent. and incentives by 184 per cent. All this can be seen in the top salaries review. Real profits went up by 45 per cent. between 1981 and 1982 and real pay by 2 per cent.

Many of those top salaries and increased dividends go to people who work in the Confederation of British Industry, and we hear Sir Terence Beckett talking about nowt for nowt, as if somehow we are all being treated the same in the distribution of resources either by the tax handout by the Government or by the distribution of dividends and shares. People realise that they are treated differently. The richer one is, the richer one gets; the poorer one is, the poorer one gets. Poverty abounds and continues to increase in this country.

That is what really annoys me about the Government's policy. Most of these policies and schemes are designed to produce low-paid part-time jobs. If anybody has any doubt about that, it is only necessary to go into a jobcentre. I go into jobcentres all the time. I find jobs advertised that are illegal, and I take the cards off the board. I find jobs offered at 30 per cent. of the takings, which is illegal according to wage councils rates.

There is one distinct difference in the jobcentres compared with the time when the Labour party was in office. There are fewer jobs but bigger cards. This is to make the jobs look more impressive. But the main jobs are community programme jobs. They are part-time, and, even with the increase in the rate which the Minister talked about, the rate in the community programme is not brought up to the real rate, which should be about £75 a week. It is still below the proper rate, and the people on these community programmes are going to be counselled to go into part-time low-paid jobs. The Government have an interest in that. It means that two people come off the dole queue instead of one. This is what the tea and sympathy and the counselling are all about. It is to get people into the community scheme jobs. That is what all these job subsidy schemes are for—to force down the wage rate and get people to work for less. The Government believe that this creates more jobs, but it only creates more part-time employment and leads to more self-employed.

I am not necessarily saying that those measures do not have a role to play, but more must be done. I can give the House a good example from my industry—shipping. I was a seaman for 10 years. I shall leave aside the question of paintings and bottles of wine. I am glad to hear that such abuses are to be stopped. Indeed, we said that that would happen. Capital finds a way of making its money. The Government say that they will extend the business expansion scheme to shipping. I am worried about shipping because we have lost about 700 ships since the Government came to power, and thousands of seamen have been thrown on the dole. The Government say that they will get shipping where it is cheapest, but with the Falkland islands campaign they went running around for ships.

I understand that the Government will encourage the BES for coastal shipping only. But the Secretary of State for Transport is dismantling cabotage—the only area in which Britain's shipping enjoys 60 per cent. of its United Kingdom cargoes. We have not yet done to our coastal trade what we have done to our deep sea fleets. The Government are stepping in with a charity scheme, while they are wholly dismantling all the jobs and the fleets in coastal shipping. But we are arguing against their proposals, relying as they do on the market system and on giving tea and sympathy. Many of the community programme schemes offer low pay, low skills, and few hours. Anyone can see through those schemes. It was hoped that 30 per cent. of the places would be full-time jobs, but the figure has dropped to 16 per cent. The Government's policy is to create part-time, low-paid, poverty jobs, and the MSC is their agent in doing that. That is why people resist MSC schemes and think that they are skivvy schemes.

It is not only the Labour party which talks about alternatives. I am sure that we shall hear much more about them. Indeed, we have heard about them before from the Conservative Benches, the Trades Union Congress, the Confederation of British Industry and the wets. They all say that public expenditue can be used to create more jobs, that local authority enterprise boards can be vamped and put in reverse to create more jobs.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook pointed out how 1 million jobs could come in two years. We have said how much that will cost, and the areas where they will come, but the Government criticise us for not having worked out how we shall find bricklayers and joiners. The Paymaster General made great play of housing. Obviously, we want to use the £6 billion in local

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authority capital receipts from the sale of council houses. We know that 500,000 building workers are on the dole and that there is a need for houses. Is that not a sensible way to get people back to work? The Paymaster General is responsible for doing something about the unemployed, but he tells us that the skills are not available. He tells us that, having dismantled the skill training centres and the industrial training boards.

I wish to put a simple proposition to the Paymaster General. I think that the debate has been helpful to him to get to know the facts. In 1978-79, 280,000 houses were built, but in 1985 only 190,000 were built. Where did we get the skills so many years ago to run such a big building programme? Where did they go? The skills must still be there. They may have gone into the black economy. I have no doubt that there is a good deal of that going on in that industry. *[Interruption.]* I am adding the two together. I know that the Government do not like to do that. They talk only about the private sector. I shall let the Paymaster General into a secret. There is a brickie who works on both private and public houses, and his skills are needed for both.

If we had the skills for that programme in 1979, why do we not have them now? Of course we have them. They may be used in the black economy for a few bob in the pocket. We are looking at that aspect carefully. I would not mind financing a programme with those people. However, I had better leave it at that. People in the black economy are avoiding their obligations to pay national insurance and taxes, as they should and as they do on community programmes.

The Paymaster General does not need to worry or to rely on smears about a £25 billion programme. I see that the Chief Secretary has left the Chamber. My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) challenged him last night. She said:

"The Chief Secretary claims that the Labour party proposes to spend £235 million on teachers,"

and £871 millon on building and equipment. The Chief Secretary admitted that that claim did not come from the Labour party, or even Labour party documents. The Chief Secretary replied:

"Could I say quite simply to the hon. Lady that I am happy indeed to get the record right . . . I want to establish . . . precisely what pledges the Opposition are putting forward. I shall be very happy to tick them off from the £24 billion."—[*Official Report*, 19 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 374.]

The right hon. Gentleman accepted that they were not Labour party figures. It was a big slur by the Government, and propaganda about a programme which was not part of Labour's policy.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Gentleman stopped that quote at a convenient point. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary said that he would be happy to tick the pledges off, and that if the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who was in the Chamber,

"would like to write to me telling me what pledges I have got wrong, I will do the costing accurately."—[*Official Report*, 19 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 374.]

We have costed the Labour party programme at that figure, and we are waiting for the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, or someone, to write to us saying on which promises the Labour party will renege to get its present public spending commitments down to the figure that it is now talking about.

Mr. Prescott: Even if the logic is correct, why did the Government not write and ask in the first place? If the Government were concerned, all they had to do was ask.

The Minister's answer makes the position clear. He is new to the job of Employment spokesman. He was brought in with a new image. I accept that Lord Young has a completely different style. He not only fiddles the figures, but fiddles television and radio interviews to ensure that he does not appear to defend his policies. He is gutless and has no courage to defend his policies, so we must make do with the number two—the Paymaster General.

The Budget is an offence and a kick in the teeth to the unemployed. All it is offering is more tea and sympathy in various sorts of schemes designed to reduce wage levels, and to create more part-time work to fiddle the employment figures. There is an alternative and Labour is presenting it. The issue of getting people back to work will be proven with the return of a Labour Government.

5.36 pm

Mr. Peter Rees (Dover): The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has made a long and vigorous speech. I hope that he will not think me discourteous if I do not follow every point that he made because many of them did not appear to relate closely to the Budget. They may be more appropriate in a more general debate on employment, or on a debate about merchant shipping, about which he knows I am concerned.

I rather warmed to the hon. Gentleman when he opened his speech by saying with becoming candour that he would produce clear, precise and carefully-costed proposals for reducing unemployment and dealing with that problem. Despite the 55 minutes that elapsed, I still remain—this may be a reflection on my capacity for absorbing his oratory — entirely unclear about the Labour party's precise proposals.

I heard and read with care the words of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), and saw his proposals. I did not notice whether they were endorsed by the hon. Gentleman. Perhaps he was wise not to. Or does the hon. Gentleman endorse them?

Mr. Prescott: Yes.

Mr. Rees: The hon. Gentleman does endorse them. The proposals amount to £1 billion on infrastructure for capital programmes, and an increase in public-sector employment, costing a further £1 billion. I commend the right hon. Gentleman for his modesty and self-restraint. He then went on, perhaps a little less modestly and with a little less self-restraint, to endorse completely, perhaps not entirely understanding the figures, the recommendations of the all-party Select Committee. That would take him up into the £8 billion region.

I sense a certain unease on the Opposition Benches about the levels of public expenditure to which they may or may not have committed themselves. I noted the uncharacteristically sharp words of the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald), who is beating a retreat at this moment, and who promises my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary hard times in Committee.

We in the House and people outside are entitled to have carefully costed proposals from the Labour party. It may

be that the Labour party is resiling rapidly from the figure of £24 billion, but I will not go into the details of that. *[Interruption.]* I have a warm regard for the contributions from the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) with whom I had delightful and often constructive debates last year in Standing Committee. Perhaps in due course he will throw a little bit of light on these matters. I know that the temptation in opposition is always to commit oneself to a little bit more than one can fulfil, but the country and the House are entitled to know in more detail what the proposals are, what they will cost, and how they will be funded.

I should like now to turn to what should be the subject matter of the debate, the Budget proposals. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East made a vigorous and voluminous speech, but my confidence in his grasp of the Budget proposals was a little shaken when I heard him say that the stamp duty reductions would be more than the figure devoted to employment measures. Let us look at both. The stamp duty reductions in the year 1986-87 are self cancelling. Page four of the Red Book says that there will be a reduction in the rate which will cost £70 million and there will be an extension of the base which will yield £70 million.

The changes in capital transfer tax, or, as we must now call it, the inheritance tax, will involve a remission of tax of £35 million. If the hon. Gentleman had cast his eye a little bit further down he would have seen that the total gross expenditure on employment measures will cost £195 million. The hon. Gentleman has possibly not done his homework in this field with quite the assiduity that he showed in other areas. If there is tea and sympathy on the Government side of the House, there is a great deal of tea and great deal of sloganising on the Opposition side, but not many practical measures.

I should now like to look at some of the measures which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor so wisely commended to the House. I congratulate the Chancellor because he constructed some rather attractive bricks with only a little straw. I am sure the House understands the constraints under which he was operating. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said that, notwithstanding the constraints, there was an opportunity for a great economic breakout. Alas, his suggestions gave me the impression that he had not the remotest idea of how to achieve an economic breakout.

I hope there is common ground on the fact that the lowering of oil prices, if maintained, should feed through over the years to assist in creating a yet more buoyant and vigorous industry and should yield increasing amounts of corporation tax to the Exchequer. It was an irony, and perhaps a difficulty, for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor that concurrently with the Budget speech there was an important OPEC meeting, the conclusion of which is perhaps a little bit difficult to divine at the present time. The lowering of oil prices should assist in reducing further the rate of inflation. My right hon. Friend was right to defer the major reforms upon which all my hon. and right hon. Friends have set their hearts.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. and learned Friend explain why the lowering of oil prices will necessarily reduce the rate of inflation? It will reduce some costs, but if inflation comes from an increase in the money supply, will the reduction not be balanced by increases in other costs?

Mr. Rees: I do not take such a theoretical view as my hon. Friend. Fuel and energy costs bulk large not only in domestic but also in industrial budgets, and I hope that they will be reflected in the figures I have cited. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook talked about the "essential triviality" of my right hon. Friend's Budget. Has he really grasped the philosophic thrust that has characterised not only this Budget but other Conservative Budgets? It is right for my right hon. Friend and his predecessor to take credit for perhaps the longest period of sustained growth over the past 10 or even 20 years, and that has been coupled with a steady downward trend in inflation. That emphasises the underlying soundness of the economy and of Government financial policy.

It cannot be the enfeebled economy that the Opposition would have us believe it is. We have time to survive the miners' strike and the uncertainties of the oil market. Casting my mind forward to the future, I hope that against this background my right hon. Friend will share his thinking with the House about when it would be appropriate for us to join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system. This may not be the appropriate moment or the appropriate debate in which to ask about that.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): It is as good a time as any.

Mr. Rees: I think that my hon. Friend has reached the same conclusion as I have. This is a decision that we cannot shirk for ever. I will be persuaded by the able advocacy of my right hon. Friend when he winds up on Monday or by the advocacy of my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary when he winds up tonight. I leave them diffidently with the thought that perhaps the time will come—if not this week or this month then perhaps this summer—for some movement on this delicate front. I am sure that the advantages of such a movement are clear to the House.

I should like to revert to more immediate concerns. It was made clear by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor that the essential theme of the Budget and the long-term theme of the Conservative party is the encouragement of a property owning democracy. We have moved a little further away from the cry of three acres and a cow. It is now a house, a transportable pension scheme and, it is hoped, a modest stake in the equity market. That is the background of this Budget. We could have a significant debate on the philosophic divide between hon. Members on the Government side and hon. Members in the Opposition. I hope that hon. Gentlemen who feel able to contribute to such a debate will explain to us their real objections to the Budget and will not repeat the prejudices which I am sure the hon. Member for Sedgefield does not share. Perhaps he could explain the objections of thinking members of his party.

I used to think that the Labour party would like us all to be tenants of local authorities and employees of the state and, ultimately, pensioners of the state. I am sure I have misconstrued its thinking, but we are left a little bit in the dark. We are reminded constantly by the Opposition that we are possibly within a year or a year and a half, and certainly not more than two years, of a general election. The Labour party owes us its thinking on that and on other subjects. I hope I shall be forgiven for dealing in generalities, but our policies will create not only social and

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industrial stability, but will generate and sustain the increased economic activity which alone can create sound and long lasting jobs.

If one looks at the speech by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, one sees that it is once again a question of padding the public sector payroll. The thinking of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, who has abandoned the House—I have no doubt for good reasons—was to treat the local authorities as the engines for creating employment. The clear inference was that the payroll of the local authorities should be padded. Is that a constructive suggestion in the second half of the 20th century?

I now come to the measures which I find especially attractive and skilful in the Budget. Bearing in mind the limited resources that my right hon. Friend had to deploy, I commend the business expansion scheme and its permanent extension. I had something to do with its early initiation and I recognise that it needed to be refined and improved. I am sure that my hon. and right hon. Friends will be open minded in considering whether it needs to be expanded as well as redefined. The principle has now been accepted and the scheme is recognised as a useful and appropriate way of mobilising capital for developing businesses. That is a healthy development.

I well understand the pressure on my Treasury colleagues, and why the profit sharing proposals could not be deployed now. However, I await them, as they are developed, in keen anticipation. Over the years we have had share incentive schemes. I know that the alliance is particularly attracted to such schemes, and I hope that it will find common ground with the Government in approving of profit sharing proposals. No doubt the Labour party, with its hard-line approach to such matters, will attempt to rubbish them, but all moderate and thinking people will recognise the advantages to be derived from some new thinking in this area.

I turn to the personal equity plan. I have always nourished some interest in the Loi Monory. Of course, it will not be reproduced exactly in a British context; indeed, we know that circumstances in France were slightly different. Nevertheless, I welcome the Loi Lawson. I certainly do not underestimate the contribution that it can make.

I have no reservation about the part played by pension funds and insurance companies in our social and economic life. But it is important to encourage people to hold a direct personal stake in the shares of British companies. Buying shares, for example, in companies that are household names will lead people to understand their position, and the real economic prospects. Such an understanding has been lacking until now.

I shall now consider the provisions relating to capital transfer tax. I remember the sharp debates that we had over the winter Finance Bill introduced by the last Labour Administration. I always thought that it was an ill-judged price to pay for the support of the extreme Left wing of the Labour party for other measures that had to be carried through. But that is an abiding feature of Labour Governments. They have to pay a price to their Left wing. In those days, the Treasury Bench, if pressed, would probably have said that it was of limited concern to it whether or not there was an extension of capital transfer tax, but that such and such had to be done to satisfy the —to coin a phrase from the then Chancellor of the Exchequer—"tiny Chinese minds" of the Left wing of the Labour party.

We rightly committed ourselves to drawing the teeth of capital transfer tax, and I believe that we have fully honoured that commitment. The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) made a characteristically elegant contribution yesterday. I was rather charmed by his military metaphors, as I had not heard them from his lips before. However, in his absence, I should like to commend him on that new turn in his eloquence. The right hon. Gentleman suggested that we should try to establish a stable regime. I believe that stability can be achieved using the measures that the Government have in mind. There are always points of significant detail to consider, and we may have to consider rates from time to time, but we now have a structure which will not always be attractive to those families who will have to meet this impost but which could provide us with some common ground. I hope that the alliance will confirm my feelings on that point.

We were right to give priority to tax thresholds during the past few years. Moreover, I warm to the statement of my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary that there is room to advance on both fronts. It must be recognised that the starting point for income tax, coupled with national insurance payments, is now as high as, if not higher than, that in any other country in western Europe. Indeed, as my right hon. Friend so appropriately and gracefully emphasised yesterday, we should consider the middle band of taxpayers and reflect on how far their position has been advanced over the years. We should contemplate whether a little more could be done for them.

At the risk of striking a rather heterodox pose and perhaps disavowing some of the things that I have said in the past, I should point out that the time may come, particularly when the Inland Revenue has computerised its activities, to consider returning to a variety of intermediate rate bands. I fully realise the breathtaking nature of that proposal. I have argued vigorously against a single intermediate rate band because it concentrates the advantages too narrowly. However, I am no longer in a position to master the technicalities of my proposal, and am not even in a position to cost it. I recognise that it might be rather expensive, but I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will give it some thought.

It is appropriate to point out that so far no Opposition Front-Bench spokesman has made any reference to the staggering and imaginative reliefs that have been devised for charities not only in this Budget but in previous ones. I have read all the speeches of Opposition spokesmen, although I hope that I have not read them too fast. Indeed, we have not even had tea and sympathy for charities from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East. That tells us a little about the Opposition's approach to hardship and poverty. It is an institutionalised Socialist approach. I see that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East is stirring uneasily and I hope that he will give the lie to that.

Mr. Prescott: It is all in the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock).

Mr. Rees: I am delighted to hear that, and I am willing to withdraw my remarks. I candidly admit that I did not take the speech of the Leader of the Opposition seriously enough, and I shall make an exception in the case of the

right hon. Gentleman. However, I shall give way if the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East wishes to intervene in response to my remarks.

We have had an imaginative Budget. We shall, of course, look for more substantial moves next year, but this Budget can be taken as an earnest of things to come. More importantly, it demonstrates the continuing vitality and original thinking of both the Treasury and the Government. One is bound to contrast that with the thinking of the Labour party, with its muddle over its public expenditure plans, which is perhaps symptomatic of the difficulties that it finds itself in. The rather harsh exchanges that were heard between my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary and Opposition Members show that the Opposition are a little uneasy about the paucity of careful thought on their Benches. But we would like to know what their public expenditure plans are, and what programmes they would boost and what programmes they would trim.

Mr. Prescott: They are coming.

Mr. Rees: Well, we have been waiting a very long time. The Labour party has been in opposition since 1979, and there may be another general election sooner rather than later. The Labour party owes it to the country to spell out in detail — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East may have spoken about it, but then his speech was bereft of any thinking on this subject.

At present the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has said only that all the higher rate reliefs would be clawed back and that there would be an investment income surcharge. He put the simple proposition that the higher earners had been uniquely benefited. I remind him and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East that they were uniquely disadvantaged during the years of Labour rule. It cannot be a maxim that this country's unity must be bought by income tax rates of 98 and 83 per cent.

We have been told that this is a divisive Budget. I have heard nothing from the Opposition Benches to suggest that their fiscal plans will achieve harmony, let alone any economic vitality. The Opposition's fiscal plan is a step back to the 1970s and the sterile slogans of class warfare which are utterly irrelevant to the latter part of the 20th century and which have been decisively rejected at the last two general elections.

The electorate will recognise where there has been constructive and imaginative thinking. It will recognise this Budget as evidence of that thinking, and I shall support my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget proposals with real pleasure in the Division Lobby on Monday.

6.1 pm

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): I am pleased to follow the right hon. and learned Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) because I would like to begin my speech by covering those points of the Budget where I am happy to agree with the Government's actions and to say that, in some respects, we shall be pleased to support the Government on those proposals in the Finance Bill and in later stages.

Not all the points relate to the Finance Bill but I will mention some points that are important. First, there has been a substantial change in the Government's attitude towards the international and national finance markets. The reason why the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) got it wrong about interest rates the other week when he forecast that they would rise——

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): The alliance got it wrong too.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: No, we did not make that forecast. In fact, we made the opposite forecast because some alliance hon. Members were aware of what was happening in the City at that time. What happened then was something which should have happened previously and which I am pleased that the Government have done. They have intervened through the Bank of England in the financial markets in order to steer interest rates in a way that they were not prepared to do previously.

In his Budget speech, the Chancellor paid some compliments to the efforts made by the United States Administration — by the Secretary of State and the chairman of the Federal Reserve bank — through their intervention in world markets and by way of the Plaza agreement. That agreement has benefited this country and the whole international financial system. I welcome the change of view that intervention by Governments in these markets is beneficial and I hope that the Government will continue to pursue that policy.

I am pleased also to welcome the Government's announced intention to examine the possibility of giving tax relief for profit sharing and I join the right hon. and learned Member for Dover on that point. The House will not be surprised to hear that the alliance has some pride of authorship in supporting that suggestion. The suggestion is only tentative at this stage but, like the right hon. and learned Gentleman, we shall follow with great interest what the Government are doing and if they can come up with a scheme that will help to encourage profit-sharing to become a much greater part of the remuneration of staff at all levels in enterprises, we shall in principle give that scheme our support.

Similarly, we support in principle the Government's proposals for tax relief and other benefits for people buying shares for the personal equity plan. However, having looked at some of the details, I am not as impressed with the scheme as I was by its original principle. I fear that the benefits that are offered and the scale of the scheme are very limited and I do not think that it will be Loi Lawson. The scheme has a lot further to go before it achieves what France and other countries have done to encourage people to buy a substantial number of shares. It has our support in principle, but in practice we will have to study the details in the Finance Bill before we decide our attitude on the matter.

I am pleased to support the Government's proposals on charities, which are comprehensive, both for the expenditure made by charities and the contributions made to them. The proposals will be widely welcomed inside and outside the House.

I also welcome the publication of the Green Paper on the reform of personal taxation. The proposals to separate the taxation of man and wife are welcome. I have made similar proposals in previous Finance Bills and this idea has had increasing support across the political spectrum. However, I do not think that the alliance will be able to support the proposals for the transferability of allowances contained in the Green Paper. Obviously a great deal more study must take place before we can strike our attitudes on

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the detailed proposals. However, it is good to have the proposals in their present form, as they allow public debate to take place before the computerisation of the revenue takes place in 1990 and we can all come up with proposals for consideration.

I would like to make the following appeal to the Government. I hope that they will consider in a way that they were regrettably not prepared to consider in relation to pensions the possibilities of seeking some agreement between the parties on the direction and shape of the proposed taxation system. There are some areas on that issue where we might be able to get agreement across the Floor of the House. It may benefit the Revenue, the Government and, most importantly, the country if we can have some stability in the organisation of the tax system rather than having constant changes with changes of Government. I would suggest that the Government have consultations across the parties to see whether a measure of agreement can be reached on the proposals.

Those are the areas of the Budget for which I commend the Government. However, my commendations must end on the shape of the Budget strategy. The Chancellor's sums depend on a very rosy view of international and national activity in the economy over the forthcoming year. His projection of a 5·5 per cent. growth in world trade compared with 3 per cent. this year generated by falling oil prices may be correct. Whether British exporters can share in that expansion depends crucially upon the effects of unit labour costs and whether those costs will undermine the possibility of firms taking up some of the demand from overseas that will undoubtedly come as a result of the fall in the price of oil.

The Chancellor's PSBR and other targets crucially depend on how much progress we can make in the direction of unit labour costs. The Chancellor has not paid sufficient attention to the impact in the longer term that the fall in the price of oil and the rise in unit labour costs will have on our balance of payments. Our current account will very soon come under increasing pressure as the revenues from the sale of oil overseas decline and as our unit labour costs make industry less competitive. In future, that will be a major constraint on the economy for any Government to face. I would like the Minister to pay attention to the forecasts and respond to that clear threat for the future.

The principal criticism that I and my colleagues make of this Budget is that its priorities are wrong. The expenditure upon which the Chancellor has embarked as a result of his fiscal adjustment—the cut in taxes—is the wrong thing to do at present. The Budget has done nothing to use the Chancellor's fiscal freedom to encourage and increase jobs in the most cost-effective way and it has done very little to help the competitiveness of British industry.

There has been a great debate, which we have witnessed again today, about the costing of the Labour party's proposals. I would like to say a few words about public expenditure as I think that the Government's actions have been valuable in exposing the hollow nature of the Labour party's proposals and in drawing attention to the grave problems of public expenditure which this Government and any Opposition party with any sense would recognise are constantly being faced today, in this country and elsewhere.

Not many people acknowledge that public expenditure has increased under the Government. The financial deficit shows an increase to £12·2 billion. There have been substantial increases in public expenditure in some programmes. They are not the programmes that I and my colleagues would like to see expanded. The defence budget has been massively increased, as indeed has the employment benefit and social security benefit programmes. They have been one of the major reasons why public expenditure has increased.

But any Government today will have major problems in containing the growth of public expenditure. The Government's analysis of Labour's promises has drawn attention to the way in which parties in opposition can too easily make great promises to all sorts of pressure groups and end up in the position of the Labour party. We recognised that a long time ago and I hope that the Economic Secretary will accept that. We did not just pull figures out of the sky in the way that the Labour party has. We sought, as well as we could, to test our budget proposals not only on one economic model but on two. There are grave problems for any Opposition party doing that without the resources of all the Government Departments behind it. We published all the figures and consequences of that and decided upon the public sector borrowing requirement that we were prepared to accept could be borne.

I hope that the Minister will acknowledge that we were making a serious attempt to put forward a credible policy. Certainly that has been widely acknowledged in parts of the press that are not sympathetic to our cause and in other areas of the public press. We have clearly stated the consequences of our programmes for inflation, the PSBR, the exchange rate and interest rates in forthcoming years.

We have heard a lot of figures from the Labour Front Bench about what the Labour party will spend on this and that. But we have heard little about what the interest rate, the exchange rate or the PSBR will be in two years' time under Labour's programme. In fact, we have heard nothing at all.

The right hon. and learned Member for Dover and the Minister cannot have heard the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook on the radio this morning. I almost had a crash listening to him in my car on the "Jimmy Young" programme. The £3·5 billion that he has gladly given out to the pensioners, the long-term unemployed and all the others who have been promised great increases in benefit he took away this morning. We were told that that money would come from the top 5 per cent.—those who earn £25,000 and more. But this morning the right hon. Gentleman said when pressed that he had always felt that people who earned about £25,000 had been taxed much too heavily and that he had nothing against people earning £25,000 and above. He then went on to say that there would be no increase in income tax for those people. Where he thinks he will get £3·5 billion from to increase pensions and all the other benefits if he does not increase income tax on people earning above £25,000, I do not know. He will certainly not get that money from increases in capital taxes on those people and the others that he is proposing. The bulk of that £3·5 billion could come only from restoring the levels of taxation—which he then went on to condemn—that had been levied in the past upon such highly paid people.

That is typical of what we have heard month in and month out from Labour spokesmen. They have taken

figures out of the air which, when added up, are meaningless. It is nothing more than a public relations exercise. It is irresponsible opposition. The Opposition are not prepared to test their figures on the London Business School computer, on the Treasury computer, on the National Institute economic model or anywhere else. We are told that we shall have the figures in a year's time but I bet that that deadline will slip because the Opposition are caught between the Left in their party, who want them to spend the money, and the figures—the consequences of the programme that they are putting forward. They cannot reconcile those two forces. That is why we shall never have any serious proposals from them.

I acknowledge that containing public expenditure is a major problem for any Administration. The Government have demonstrated the truth of that by the difficulties that they have had in reining back public expenditure, about which they have been enthusiastic. My right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) pointed to that fact yesterday. Unless we are able to increase the competitiveness of British industry and to increase Britain's wealth we shall not be able to increase public expenditure in the way that all the pressure groups and I and my colleagues in the alliance want to do in the future. As the revenues from oil decline and as the contribution to the balance of payments from oil declines, it is crucial that manufacturing industry should be efficient and beat the competition from West Germany, Japan, America and other countries.

The only way in which we can improve the efficiency of manufacturing industry is by having a long-term plan. We put proposals in our budget statement for that for improved education and training and for cutting the employers' national insurance contribution. I shall not go through all the proposals that we made, but they hang together to get people back to work and to increase the competitiveness of British industry in order to increase the size of the cake from which to pay for social services, the Health Service and all the other things. That is vital and that is why our major criticism of the Budget is that the £1 billion or thereabouts that the Chancellor had available has been given away in a cut in income tax of 1p. That will do virtually nothing to get people back to work. A reasonable estimate is that it will create about 30,000 jobs over two years. It will do virtually nothing to help the competitiveness of British industry. If that money had been spent on research and development, which the Chancellor mentioned, industry would not have been on its own. All he was able to say was that the private sector will be allowed to increase its profits. Yes, it must have profits, and substantial profits, to reinvest, but cannot the Chancellor seek to direct that investment and to help industry by using the substantial amount of money that he has given to those who are in work to help industry and so to get some people off the dole queue, using that capacity to create the wealth that we need for the social services and the other things that we all want to see?

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I am listening carefully to what the hon. Gentleman is saying. Surely the way in which we shall be able to compete successfully in world markets is by producing higher quality goods. I hope that he will give us some idea of how he will put forward policies which will enable us to produce goods of a quality and kind which will compete successfully in world markets.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: We shall have to spend a great deal more on research and development in industry. We shall have to spend a great deal more on obtaining a highly skilled, highly educated work force that is innovative and can produce the best in design and one that has all the talents to create that wealth. We must not do what the Government have done much too much of—trying to have a low-paid, low-skill economy. That may be all right for developing countries, where there is cheap labour that can be used to undercut in many mass production industries. But, indeed, even in that sphere there is no future.

Although I am pointing out the importance of manufacturing industry, we shall not go back, as some Labour Members seem to think, to the position where tens of thousands of people are employed in factory after factory with smoke rising from the chimneys in the regions and other parts of Britain. We shall have a decreasing number of people working in manufacturing industry.

Manufacturing industry must remain productive and be the most effective means of creating wealth in the economy, upon which the service industries can be based. The City of London and many of our service industries, among the best in the world, would not exist were it not for the great manufacturing and trading power of our country in the past.

The manufacturing base was eroded dramatically during the period 1979 to 1981. The Government made many wrong decisions. We had a high exchange rate, high interest rates and manufacturing industry and other sectors were undermined by economic circumstances. It was not that they were inefficient but rather that they were undermined by such circumstances. At the same time there was the Clegg report and VAT was increased from 8 per cent. to 15 per cent.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): The hon. Gentleman has accused the Government of making wrong decisions. Is he saying that the cut in the basic rate of income tax by 1p to 29p is a wrong decision? Is he opposed to that?

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I am absolutely opposed to it. It is the wrong priority at this time. In the future I would love to see a 25p rate of income tax. A rate of income tax of 25p on a much bigger base in a wealthier country would raise more revenue than the rate of 30p or the proposed 29p. A rate of 25p is a marvellous aim. We will not achieve that unless we invest in the things we advocated in our budget proposals and our autumn statement.

There is consensus — it unfortunately does not encompass the Treasury Benches—among many right hon. and hon. Members on Conservative and Labour Benches. This consensus is shared by the British Institute of Management, the CBI, management in industry and the trade unions. It is most regrettable that the Government will not recognise this consensus and act upon it.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) has said before—so it will come as no surprise to hon. Members to hear it again—that many of the policies that the Government have implemented with regard to industrial relations over the past few years have been enormously beneficial. The increased productivity that has been achieved in the steel, mining and other industries is largely a result of the firm

[Mr. Wrigglesworth]

steps that the management and the Government have taken. It is right to acknowledge and welcome those achievements. However, much more needs to be done.

Where should that money go and what should we do with that money? The Paymaster General criticises us for wanting to spend some of the money on the community programme. I am sorry that he made that criticism. The community programme has made a great contribution to helping people who are suffering unemployment, as it has provided work for a substantial number of people. It is an immediate and cost-effective way of getting people back to work. That is why we suggested that the ceiling should be doubled and that more money should be directed to the programme. The programme is effective, both in terms of time and in terms of cost, in providing worthwhile jobs. We have also suggested a 10 per cent. cut in each of the bands of employers' national insurance contributions. That would help to make industry more confident—it would be able to increase its sales in overseas markets, increase profits and therefore invest more. The national insurance contribution is a tax on jobs. A cut of 10 per cent. in national insurance contributions—not the 1 per cent that we previously advocated and that is now advocated by the Labour party—would encourage firms to take on more labour. There is considerable evidence to substantiate that a percentage cut on each band would be a most effective way of achieving it. It would encourage firms to take on more highly skilled labour as well as benefiting people in the lower rate bands.

We would like to see more help given to the long-term unemployed. There is a high level of unemployment and something should be done immediately. The long-term unemployed should be on a long-term rate of supplementary benefit and family support and child benefit should be increased. Help should also be given to pensioners who are being hit hard by the current economic circumstances. We would also want to see a programme for skills.

As part of the mix of expenditure which we would like to see the Government embark upon, £2 billion should be spent on what is loosely called the infrastructure. The Paymaster General did a great disservice to the House by giving the impression that we are simply proposing highly capital-intensive investment. All we have said in our budget proposals is that it should include:

"tackling the major backlog of housing repairs and maintenance, and building and renovating houses to meet the substantial requirement for accommodation, renewing out-dated NHS hospitals; rebuilding dilapidated sewers and undertaking essential road construction schemes and repairs."

There is a tremendous amount of work in the public sector that needs to be done. Such work would not damage our current account because it is not import-intensive. It uses indigenous materials. Such work is labour-intensive. We have concentrated on house repairs, insulation and renovation. This work and the new start programmes are the most labour-intensive. We believe that mix of proposals would be the best way to help in the long term those who have been hardest hit in the shortterm.

I join with the right hon. and learned Member for Dover in regretting that the Chancellor had nothing to say about joining the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system. We have advocated this, not in a blind desire to go headlong into Europe, as some of our opponents have tried to suggest, but in the belief that this system would sustain confidence. It would provide discipline, would give greater stability, and would take out some of the peaks and troughs both in the interest rates and the exchange rates. It would be beneficial to British industry and to the community as a whole.

If we were to join the exchange rate mechanism it would allow the European monetary system to develop into a much more effective force within the international financial system. Britain's half-in, half-out position is preventing the development of the system. For these reasons I hope that, one weekend, the Chancellor—or perhaps the Prime Minister is the right person—will decide to join the exchange rate mechanism and on the following Monday an announcement to that effect will be made. Bearing in mind our present exchange rate with the basket of currencies, the position of the deutschmark and dollar, this is the most appropriate time for negotiations to take place. I hope that the Government will do something about it.

I come now to unit labour costs. In the last quarter of 1985 unit wage costs in the United Kingdom increased by 5 per cent. In Japan and West Germany there was a nil increase and in the United States they increased by 2 per cent. In recent years, unit labour costs in Britain have continued to increase consistently compared with the costs of our major competitors. That must stop. Unless it does, we shall not be able to compete with our major competitors, especially in West Germany, Japan and the United States, and the comparative decline in Britain will continue.

We must make tough decisions and face up to difficult circumstances if we are to stop that decline. The Government must be prepared to intervene, not only in the level of interest rates, as they are now rightly doing, but by having a pay strategy. Exhortations from the Dispatch Box and criticisms at CBI dinners of what is happening are not enough.

I hope that one of the proposals we advocated in our statement on the Budget and which the Government appear to have taken up will be developed—the proposal to give tax relief on profit sharing. We have advocated tax relief because there has been justifiable criticism of the old-style pay policies, which have sought to penalise firms and people for increasing pay levels above the norm. We have advocated that firms should enter into longer-term pay contracts, initially for two years and perhaps later for three years, instead of an annual pay round, and that firms should encompass within those contracts a much greater share of the profits. We have proposed giving financial benefits to firms that conclude such agreements.

I hope that the Government will be persuaded to move in that direction. We believe that that measure should be tried and that it could provide the key to moderating the type of pay settlements made recently which have been undermining our competitiveness, increasing our unit labour costs and thereby ensuring that unemployment is not reduced.

We are opposed to this Budget strategy because it concentrates on giving to those who already have—to those who have jobs, and to those who have incomes—rather than on investing in the long-term future of industry and on getting people back to work to create the wealth needed for all the social services and for the public expenditure that we and many others would like.

6.32 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I was pleased to note the number of aspects of the Budget welcomed by the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth). One might have expected him to welcome the profit-sharing measures. He welcomed also the personal equity scheme and the Budget's approach to unit costs. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor stressed some of the points that were made by the hon. Gentleman, although not in the same way. The Government realise as strongly as the hon. Gentleman that the level of unit costs is one of the major factors that will make or break the long-term strategy for economic advance. Unless unit costs are held down, there will be considerable problems. Although I do not believe that the Government can do this on their own, I believe that a strong Government lead is essential.

I agree with the hon. Member for Stockton, South in only one aspect of his criticism of the Government. The Government will not be surprised to find that, as chairman of the Science and Technology Committee of the North Atlantic Assembly, I am sorry that more has not been done for research and development. Research and development provides one of the ways in which long-term jobs can be created for the future. I do not believe that total expenditure on research and development—whether by industry or by Government through their aid programmes and grants—is sufficient. I should have been much happier if M3—I think it is now known as "broad money"—had been increased by another £500 million to stimulate research and development in industry generally.

I think that it would be surly of me in a debate that should be mainly concerned with unemployment if, as the first Member from the west country to speak, I did not refer to some of the benefits that the Budget has provided for the west country. For many years, I have campaigned for those concerned that charities should receive a greater benefit from tax relief. I strongly welcome, as do many people in the west country who play a major role in charities, the fact that the Government have at last seen the wisdom of the arguments we have put to them.

I welcome also the higher VAT registration limit because of the impact it will have on small businesses in the west country. The threshold has been increased by more than might have been expected. That is obviously a good thing, although I should have liked a greater increase.

I welcome the proper indexation of income tax thresholds for the elderly and pensioners. That change was essential for my constituency and for many people living in the west country.

The abolition of the gift tax structure is of particular concern to small and medium-sized businesses which are owned by people fighting to be able to hand on their businesses to their children. I believe that that measure is more important than the media have said, especially for agriculture.

I welcome the personal equity plan. We in the west country want to see the property-owning democracy turned into an industry-owning democracy. I should be happier if at least part of that investment were allowed pre-tax rather than post-tax, because that would obviously provide greater stimulation.

Because of the type of industry and enterprise we have in the west counry, the small loans guarantee scheme is important. The area depends very much on farming and the capital allowance for agriculture buildings is, therefore, very important.

Those are many of the aspects in the Budget that will be of particular benefit to the west counry.

I have crossed swords more than once with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his former capacity as Secretary of State for Energy. I argued that Britain and the United States should have taken the lead in breaking the oligopolistic structure of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries to bring down oil prices throughout the world. Reduced oil prices are important in stimulating assistance to the economies of underdeveloped nations—for example, Ghana has to pay as much as 47 per cent. of its total foreign currency earnings just to buy the hydrocarbons needed to sustain transport and industry in that country. That will help world trade. Therefore, the decrease in those prices will have a much greater effect in world economic terms than the Chancellor has been willing to estimate. We are fortunate that this will assist in bringing down unit prices. This then has at last come about even if the Government have not been a leader.

I believe that the major aspect of economic policy surrounding the Government's approach is unemployment and the provision of more jobs for the unemployed. That is not just for the economic benefit of the nation. I go back in my political career to Bruce Griffiths and me tossing a coin way back in 1950 as to who should become the first chairman and the first secretary of the Bow group. I lost and, as the secretary, had to write the constitution. However, at no time in my political career or as part of my political philosophy could I ever stand by idly and believe that it can be accepted that 10, 12 or 15 per cent. of our people should be standing by idly, unused, unfulfilled and making no contribution to the economic strength of the nation. Equally, Conservative philosophy involves understanding not just the economic but the emotional effect that unemployment has on an individual.

I do not know how many of us in the House have experienced or known, as I have, the frustration and build-up of desperation which comes from pounding the pavements going to every potential employer in search of work. I do not know who has experienced the frustration in writing letter after letter to advertisers of jobs—and frequently to many who have not been advertising—and more often than not receiving no reply. The degradation that one experiences and the desperate anger that comes when one knows that one can contribute but no one can or will use your ability can turn to a deep bitterness against society and a loss of self-respect. That is a frustration which few who have not suffered it can really understand.

It is no good saying that that should not take place, that it is wrong to have those feelings or that it is nobody's fault. That does not overcome the anger or the bitterness. It is true that the Conservative Government have done more, spent more, and introduced more schemes than any other Government in the history of this country to overcome unemployment and they have done so in an extensive way. It is right that that should be so because our people deserve it and it is right that their demands should be met. I believe that people who are out of work have a right to demand to contribute to economic growth and that they be given the opportunity to make that contribution and be able to stand on their own feet and not have to rely on the social security benefits which the nation may provide.

[Sir Peter Emery]

Therefore, I want to take the time of the House to put forward what I believe might be an entirely new thought in trying to provide a new employment-linked investment scheme. If we accept that the reduction of employment is the Government's major policy objective, the Government must be searching for every way to ensure the creation of new jobs. Therefore, if any scheme could be put to them which would prove positively that new jobs could be created and that in so doing it would not even increase the PSBR or demand a further increase in supply expenditure, such a concept should be seriously considered. That is what I wish to outline to the House.

It is my experience that new investment decisions, when considered by boards of companies in manufacturing industry or elsewhere, which effect expansion rest on a whole variety of matters. However, after the acceptance by a board of proof that there is a market demand or a need for the product or expansion, certain factors come into play. Those factors are the political climate, the availability of labour, investment cost, return on investment, alterations to the liquidity position of the company and the whole structure of how that can be funded. Therefore, the basis of most of those decisions is the financial cost.

If the Government were able to provide some cash bonus to make that investment much more realistic, I believe that it would prove to be a major stimulus, to bring forward schemes which, at the moment, are planned but are held up for the right time or the right amount of money.

In order to encourage companies to invest in new manufacturing industry, I suggest that the Government should ask every company to register at the Department of Trade and Industry the new scheme and the number of jobs that would be created. The Government should provide that any company which registers with the Department of Trade and Industry — it would not have to — would receive an investment bonus, tax free, of £4,500—that figure could be higher or lower; the Government can alter it, because the scheme is flexible—for each job created after the new employee had been employed for 12 months. The company would have to show that the new employee had been taken off the unemployment register and had not previously been employed by the same company during the last three or six months, so that there would be no internal way to get round the scheme. The outcome of that would be to provide a cash bonus for all new investment which created new jobs. Cash is the type of bonus which stimulates medium and small businesses to introduce investment projects, and for the larger firms it would provide an interesting and new immediate cash return for their investment.

The major benefit of this scheme is that it need involve no overall cost to the Treasury. The present accepted cost for an unemployed person is between £5,200 and £5,500 per annum in benefits paid and in the loss of taxation. If the investment stimulated by the scheme was not to be made, the Exchequer would have to meet for a full year the cost of the man who is not employed. The beauty of the scheme is that no money would be paid in grant or bonus until the company could prove that it had employed staff who had worked for a period of 12 months. The saving to the Exchequer would, on whatever analysis one makes, be between £5,200 and £5,500 for each person who becomes employed. The scheme has great flexibility.

Without delaying the House for too long, I should like to give three examples. Taking a small firm with a small extension, perhaps creating eight new jobs, if one costs that out, as I have—I would be willing to provide a copy for anyone who is interested—it would be under £40,000. If that company realised that after it had employed eight persons for 12 months it would receive a cash bonus of about £36,000—that is, £4,500 multiplied by eight—can anyone think that there would not be a massive number of small firms which would be looking to expand their businesses? With a medium-sized firm, creating perhaps 80 jobs, a likely and acceptable total for expenditure would probably be about £600,000. At the rate that I have suggested, that would bring in, after 80 people had been employed for 12 months, a bonus of £360,000, which would meet approximately 47 per cent. of the total cost. Why not? The Government will have to spend that money if people are unemployed. Why not spend it in order to create jobs and get people back to work?

The flexibility of the scheme is that is could be for a limited period. In order not to overheat the economy, there could be a cut-off point after the first 300,000 jobs had been registered this year. Furthermore, different levels of bonus could be applied in different parts of the country. There could be a bonus of £4,500 in the north-east, the north-west, in Wales and in Scotland, a bonus of £3,000 in the midlands and a very small bonus in the south-east. And if we wanted to be sexist, different bonuses could be paid for jobs for men and jobs for women, or a bonus could be paid to those who have a family to support which is different from that which is paid to those who have no family to support. Massive flexibility is built into the application of the scheme.

There are two arguments against such a scheme. The first is that people would get round the regulations. The Treasury always puts up that argument. If, however, a company had to prove that it had employed people for 12 months, it would be up to that company to show to the Department of Trade and Industry that it should benefit from the scheme. If one or two firms got round the scheme, so what? It would not matter if 97 or 98 per cent. of the jobs that were created were genuine jobs.

Furthermore, it can be argued that part of this investment would not have to be paid for. Normal expansion would bring many jobs on to the market. The scheme is capable of dealing with that expansion. If 300,000 new jobs were created, while normal expansion created 60,000 new jobs, the amount of the bonus could be lowered to cover the 20 per cent. of firms to which an unnecessary bonus has to be paid. I shall not bore the House with the details, but I know that such a scheme could be worked out.

This is a new concept. It would cost no money and it would result in an incentive for industry to create long-term jobs, not just short-term jobs, that would be of major benefit to the country—in racing terms, no foal, no fee. The Government would have to pay nothing until the bonus was paid. It would have to pay the bonus only after the employer had proved that he had taken somebody off the unemployment register and provided him with work for a year.

Such a scheme would considerably help to create the incentive and the image of a caring Government who are determined to find jobs for those who are out of work. It would not go astray. Surely it is worth a try.

6.53 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): We consider the Budget against the sombre background of ever rising unemployment. Despite last year's absurdly described "Budget for jobs", there have been six consecutive annual increases in the number of people out of work. The most worrying aspect is the remorseless increase within those totals of the number of long-term unemployed. They now number 1·4 million, 800,000 of whom have been without a job for more than two years, with all the misery, heartache and waste that that involves. There is no evidence from this pygmy of a Budget that the Government either care or have a clue about what to do about it. There must be a response that is commensurate with the size and scope of this tragedy.

As the House knows, the Select Committee on Employment has produced a well researched and costed programme to give a job guarantee to the long-term unemployed. The House awaits, but now with diminishing expectations, the Government's response, which again has been delayed. The report envisaged taking on 100,000 in the National Health Service and the social services, 300,000 in a building and renovation programme and 350,000 in private industry. This, with 250,000 on the community programme, would amount to 1 million jobs and constitute the guarantee. While awaiting the Government's response, it is to the community programme that I want to address my remarks.

The Minister knows that for the past three years I and the Select Committee have advocated an expansion of the community programme — indeed, an enhanced and improved community programme. This is a programme to help long-term unemployed adults to improve their prospects by providing them with temporary employment, either full-time or part-time, on work which otherwise would not be done but which would be of practical benefit to the community. I devoted an Adjournment debate to this topic. I have taken the initiative in expanding the programme in my constituency, so nobody can say that I am an opponent, or an ill-motivated critic. However, I am forced to take a critical view of the Government's parsimonious handling of the community programme. They are damaging and jeopardising the future of the programme by trying to cut costs. They are spoiling the ship for a ha'porth of tar. This is arousing great, and justified, criticism.

The truth is that the Government's motives are suspect. They are thought to be primarily concerned with seeking cosmetically to reduce the numbers on the unemployment register at the lowest possible cost. Each month, an additional 8,000 to 9,000 people leave the register and take up places on the community programme, thus exerting a downward pressure on the monthly headline figure of unemployment, which the Government will seek to exploit politically. But the present shaving of costs is devaluing the programme and increasingly restricting it to young, single people who are doing low-paid, part-time, insecure jobs. The Budget increase in the average wage from £63 to £67 is hopelessly inadequate. I shall refer to that in a moment.

Recently the Government changed the eligibility rules —probably unlawfully—so that only those who are able to claim unemployment benefit can get a place. As we know, many of the unemployed who are seeking work, especially married women, are unable to claim benefit. The purpose and consequence of this discrimination against women was the cosmetic one of increasing the number of people taken off the register and at the same time reducing the net cost of the programme, because the previous benefits of more of the participants could be deducted from the gross costs. As a result, the net cost of removing one person from the register fell from £2,200 in 1985 to £1,900 in 1986, a fall of nearly 14 per cent.

In addition to such jobs as painting and decorating and renovating community buildings, the community programme is now funding playgroups, latch-key schemes and visiting and day care schemes for the elderly and the disabled. This is to be welcomed but obviously there will be contradictions, tensions and discontinuities between the needs of these schemes and a community programme that has restrictive eligibility and wage and operating criteria and that consists mainly of young, single men. If the Government do not want the programme to be brought into disrepute, they must pay immediate attention to a number of deficiencies and remedy them. The operating cost of each community programme place has never been increased during the lifetime of the programme, despite the increase in inflation. To keep pace with inflation, the current figure of £440 per annum would need to be increased to £514, and this should be done.

Most important, the average wage should be increased. In three years the average wage was increased only once, by 5 per cent. to £63 and, in this Budget, to £67. This miserly movement is insultingly inadequate. It amounts to not much more than one third of the national average wage. The £67 is an average as some—for example, the supervisory staff—get more and others get less. These low rates impair the quality of the programme, for the wages in the community programme have to be the trade union rate for the job.

As these other normal rates increase each year with inflation, the number of hours that can be offered on any community programme project is constantly squeezed down as each agency struggles to keep within the £67 average. This inevitably means fewer hours for part timers and a falling proportion of full timers, both of which damage the programme. In the year to August 1984, nearly 30 per cent. of the 122,600 participants were full time. By July 1985, the proportion of the 175,000 workers on the community programme in the previous year had fallen to just over 17 per cent. The low wages and reduced hours mean that part-time community programme posts are financially attractive only to single people living at home.

Over the same period, the proportion of single people on the community programme increased from 66 per cent. to more than 78 per cent. Older people and those with families, often those longest unemployed, have been squeezed out. While the 18 to 25-year-olds constitute only 36 per cent. of the eligible client group, their participation in the programme increased from 56 per cent. to nearly 60 per cent. from August 1984 to July 1985.

As a result, it is now questionable to what extent the programme is really helping the growing ranks of the long-term unemployed. The average wage on the programme must be urgently increased to at least an average minimum of £75 a week. I estimate that the net cost of that would be less than £100 million per annum. If the Government are not willing to spend that, they are not serious about wishing to solve the problem.

The eligibility rules, which limit recruitment to those drawing benefit, thus discriminating against married

[Mr. Ron Leighton]

women, reinforce the male bias of the programme: four out of five participants are men. These features not only are important for those who are excluded, but have implications for the quality of projects and of the work experience offered.

Another problem is training. At one time, 50,000 training places were to be offered on the community programme. Now, as a result of the decision to reduce the training linked-to-community programme budget by £15 million, only a few thousand training opportunities have been created, yet training, including on the job skills and day release education and training, would be an important part of any quality programme. Is it any wonder that it appears to many that the Government's main motive and priority is to remove people from the register and to massage the unemployment figures as cheaply and meretriciously as possible rather than improving the quality of the programme?

As the Minister knows, I have taken a great interest in, and given my support and encouragement to, the community programme, but this may no longer be possible. Unless extra resources are put into the programme, people like me will have to reconsider their attitude.

7.4 pm

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) has made a closely informed speech. He and I disagree on a number of matters, but I have a great deal of sympathy with what he says and does, if I may say so, in his capacity as Chairman of the Select Committee on Employment.

A number of criticisms can be made of the Budget, but one which cannot be made is that the Chancellor has inflamed the Labour party into opposition. While the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) was making a very lively speech, he was supported at no time by more than seven Opposition Back Benchers, and usually fewer than that. The Chancellor can be pleased that there is so little opposition to him from the Opposition Benches. Although the attendance on Conservative Benches has not been overwhelming, it has been a good deal better than that on the Opposition Benches.

As everybody agrees, the Chancellor has produced an extremely ingenious Budget with a lot of good things in it. What he has done about the victims of Nazi persecution is good and right—so right that one wonders why it was not done many years ago, but I suppose that nobody thought of it. I thoroughly welcome that, just as I welcome what he has done about charities, which I think will be beneficial from every conceivable point of view. The same applies to his proposals on shares and profit sharing and matters relating to popular capitalism.

I have a less warm welcome for the 1 per cent. cut in income tax because I believe that that money could have been far better used. Moreover, the income tax cut looks a bit odd beside the £2 billion increase in rates which is apparently projected this year. No doubt some of that sum is due to the policies of authorities controlled by the Opposition parties, but a good deal of it is due to the policies of the Government.

Buckinghamshire is Conservative-controlled and has a very careful and economical county council, yet entirely because of the Government's actions it has had to impose a rate increase this year of no less than 30 per cent. together with a small cut in services. Therefore, I fear that the ratepayers of Buckinghamshire will not be greatly impressed by getting 1p off their income tax.

However, in my view, the chief objection to the cut in income tax is that it will produce fewer jobs than almost any other conceivable way of using that money. I greatly welcome the Chancellor's special measures for the unemployed, but, despite the strictures which my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General and Minister for Employment gave in a persuasive but, to me, not wholly convincing speech when he complained that people should judge the measures by the amount of money that they cost, no doubt other considerations should enter into one's judgment on these matters, but I still feel that a net cost of £100 million is a good deal less than excessive. It is inadequate particularly because the lower oil price will produce lower inflation, affording the opportunity therefore for greater growth. Unemployment should, I hope, begin at last to fall a little this year, but, in view of the level that it has now reached, that will not be enough.

The Government's economic policy has had a number of successes. The way in which the exchange rate has been managed in the last few weeks with the fall in oil prices has been very skilful and has shown some good decision making by the Chancellor and some adroit management by the Bank of England.

Whatever the other successes in the economic policy have been, undoubtedly there has not been a success in regard to unemployment. The Chancellor spoke on Tuesday of five years of solid growth. Unfortunately, there have also been five years of solid growth of unemployment.

A number of changes in the counting of unemployment have been made over the years, but if we use the current definition of wholly unemployed adults seasonally adjusted, unemployment was 2,144,000 in March 1981, it has grown every year since then, and it is now 3,210,000, a solid growth of just over 1 million. If one used the previous definition, one would find that the rise was even greater. The policy on unemployment, to put it mildly, has not worked, yet it has not been changed.

Even more remarkably, the rhetoric defending that policy has not changed either. We are still told constantly that the Government cannot create jobs and that the only way that unemployment can be reduced is by bringing down inflation, by increasing efficiency and by people pricing themselves into jobs. In his Budget speech on Tuesday, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said:

"The solution to the problem of unemployment—it is the only solution—requires progress on two key fronts. The first is a sustained improvement in the performance of business and industry, and thus of the economy as a whole. That is what every aspect of the Government's economic policy has been designed to assist, and it is already achieving impressive results. The second is a level of pay which enables workers to be priced into jobs instead of pricing them out of jobs, and which in particular ensures that British industry can hold its own against our major international competitors."—[*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 171.]

On the first point, assuming that my right hon. Friend is right in saying that the Government's policy has already achieved "impressive results", it has to be said that those results have achieved nothing that is good in regard to unemployment. As to the Chancellor's second point, assuming that that too is correct, the pricing into jobs has not happened over the last seven years. One wonders what

the Government or the Chancellor can do to ensure that it happens now. Just a mild exhortation has not been productive over the last seven years. One wonders why it should be productive now.

Therefore, considering the results of the policy and the rhetoric, it seems to me that there are only two possible conclusions. The first is that the policy is mistaken, and the alternative is that unemployment is a relatively unimportant matter and should not be allowed significantly to affect economic policy. Having listened to the extremely humane speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General this afternoon, I think that the first conclusion is right. He confirmed that the second alternative is the wrong conclusion, although perhaps he did not mean to confirm that the first conclusion is right.

There is no mystery about the reasons for the failure of the policy. On Tuesday the Chancellor rightly took pride in the growth of productivity. He pointed out that since 1979 productivity in manufacturing industry had increased by an average of 3·5 per cent. a year. The rise in productivity in the economy as a whole is naturally a little less, but I think that it rose by nearly 3 per cent. between 1981 and 1985, which is still substantial.

The Chancellor also said, as reported in column 166, that we could look back on five years of growth at about 3 per cent. a year. I may be wrong about this, but to judge from page 40 of the Red Book the Chancellor must be looking forward as well as back and including 1986 in that calculation, because, if 1986 is excluded, growth seems to have been at just over 2·5 per cent. a year. Moreover, if oil is excluded, as I think it has to be for these purposes since it employs very few people, growth has been about 2·25 per cent. a year. That is the explanation of the growth in unemployment. There has never been a five-year period with that rate of growth in which unemployment did not rise. Unless output rises as fast as productivity, which it should do this year, unemployment will continue to rise.

My right hon. Friend almost always bases his calculations on 1981. In doing so he misleads himself because between 1980 and 1981 employment increased by 1 million. If the growth rate is taken from 1979 instead of 1981, it is either 1·1 per cent. or 1·2 per cent. a year. That again is the cause of unemployment.

As I said, unemployment should fall a little this year with the growth in output of 3 per cent. but, according to the Chancellor's forecast in the Red Book, in the two subsequent years growth will be only 2·5 per cent., which means that on current policies there is unlikely to be much, if any, further fall in unemployment, on the Chancellor's own figures. So a change of policy is clearly necessary. We need more growth and more special employment measures to get unemployment down. It is sad that the Chancellor has not taken the opportunity to make that change.

Many proposals have been made over the years by a number of people, including myself. My right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General talked about instant proposals. In fact, proposals have been made over a period of at least five years. So they are far from instant; if anything, they are extremely stale. The proposals have been there for some time, but unfortunatley nobody has paid much attention to them.

What is needed is a combination of measures, including increased expenditure on infrastructure. Again, my right hon. and learned Friend was scathing about that this afternoon; perhaps he should have a word with the Confederation of British Industry, which does not agree with him on it. I was not sure about the point which he was seeking to make about the shortage of skills. It seems to be a heavy condemnation of the Government's policy that, even with so much unemployment, there should be such a shortage of skills. Obviously there should be a combination of increased expenditure on infrastructure, a reduction in taxes on employment, and special meaures of the sort recommended by the Select Committee chaired by the hon. Member for Newham, North-East.

Such a strategy is needed not only because of the 3 million unemployed, although that is reason enough in itself, but because of the severe structural problems that the country faces. The Chancellor sought to make light of these problems and made rather a good flip comment about them in his Budget speech.

On a number of occasions my right hon. Friend has denigrated the House of Lords Select Committee, but there are at lest two answers to what he said. The first was given yesterday. There is all the difference in the world between a fall in the price of oil which helps almost everyone and a fall just in our oil revenues and our balance of payments which harms only us. The second answer, which is perhaps even more important, is that the problems of Britain's lack of competitiveness in manufacturing trade were evident long before we had any North sea oil. Therefore, the idea that they will disappear when North sea oil disappears is distinctly implausible. As the House of Lords Select Committee rightly said, the problem of the growing competitiveness of British industry will not solve itself.

I continue to believe that there is cause for serious concern about the future of British manufacturing industry and our competitiveness. Meanwhile, I regret that the Chancellor has not chosen the best way to make capitalism both popular and caring by reducing unemployment.

7.17 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Opening the debate today on behalf of the Opposition my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) quoted the views of various newspapers on the Budget. I want to quote from the editorial, not of a national newspaper, but of my local newspaper, the Bradford *Telegraph and Argus*. The editorial was headed "Whole lot of nothing":

> "Once again a Tory Chancellor has robbed the poor of an opportunity to climb out of the poverty trap in favour of paying the rich with his measures to encourage wider share ownership.
>
> While the Chancellor patched up his fiscal policies, he left the real core of the problem untouched. In failing to introduce any measures to cut the dole queues he is guilty of gross dereliction of duty.
>
> The decision to spend around £200 million increasing the number employed under the so-called Community Programme is little more than window dressing.
>
> What the low paid and the unemployed needed was some real help—or at least the prospect of some light at the end of the tunnel. Instead all Britain was offered was a cosmetic exercise. No amount of this sort of make-up can cover the malignant growth of unemployment.
>
> Certainly the Budget will do little to help Bradford and its problems. There were no measures to help regenerate the inner city areas and little to encourage a business community still reeling from the near 30 per cent. rate rise."

That was the authentic voice of the north, which is dominated by mass unemployment, poverty and deprivation. What is so tragic and sad about the Budget is that it was a Budget for the people who do not live in the

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north. It was a Budget of the haves against the have nots, of the comfortable against the uncomfortable, and of the south against the north.

The right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) chided the Opposition for not being inflamed by this Budget, but I think that he let the cat out of the bag as to why there are so few people in the Chamber protesting against the Government. He has said that for five years he and others have been putting forward alternatives to this Government, but they have not been heeded. The problem is that we have a Government who are deaf, uncaring and locked into their own dogma, and are not in any way prepared to respond to constructive alternative policies which are posed in this Chamber or any other place.

The right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham and the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) are present. We have had a fleeting glimpse of the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym); and the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson) was here a few moments ago. They are members of the Conservative party who have been defeated and who have been complete failures in persuading the Government to change course.

This Budget should have been about creating real jobs — the jobs to which the Prime Minister referred so much between 1976 and 1979. It should have been about combating poverty, which grips my constituency. One third of my constituents are on social security. More than 20 per cent. of them are unemployed, with the situation getting worse daily.

The Budget should have been about doing something positive to help manufacturing industry. The reality is that it does very little. At times, I read the *Daily Telegraph*, the house journal of the Conservative party, and yesterday, tucked away in its vast and often euphoric response to the Budget, was this little news item under the heading "Opportunities for Jobs Missed":

> "Builders said the Budget would push more people 'into the black economy', and that it had missed the chance to create permanent jobs in construction by putting the emphasis on cosmetic schemes for teenagers. The Building Employers Confederation said part time training schemes are helping to produce more people doing botched jobs for householders, offering lower charges because they evade paying value added tax. The Federation of Civil and Engineering Contractors also regretted that the Chancellor had 'not taken the option to create real jobs' by new investment in infrastructure projects. This was the cheapest real way of creating extra jobs."

The Paymaster General may choose to deride and sneer at that positive alternative proposal, but it remains the truth. I think that everybody, except the Government, recognises that money put into new buildings and into the renovation and improvement of old buildings is the best way to tackle one of the most urgent social problems facing this country — deprived slum areas and overcrowded housing — and will create a great many jobs quickly.

My own city at present has 9,000 people on the housing waiting list; 10,000 applications for home improvement grants have been rejected; 5,000 properties have been found to be structurally defective, and 5,000 more without water, inside toilets or bathrooms. That is the collective inheritance which we could tackle tomorrow with money and conviction if the Government had the political will to do it. The sad fact is that that will does not exist, and will not exist until the people of this country have pushed this Government into changing the direction of its policies.

More resources should be made available for housing, especially to local authorities. We need a relaxation of the limits on capital receipts—another way of unlocking a lot of money which could be put into housing. There is disappointment in my city that we were left off the list of eight cities to receive special help in tackling our inner city problems. I hope that the Economic Secretary will be able to say when Bradford will receive additional help to tackle our problems. We meet every criteria of the other cities that were given help, and we have the unique feature that our population is due to increase by 10 per cent. in the next 20 years.

The Budget does nothing for the poor. It is obscene that it took money away from the unemployed. It gave £9 a week extra to people on £50,000 a year, but the family on £4,000 a year were lucky if they saw an extra £1·60 a week. That is the scale of this Government's priorities. Those are their real feelings about the people of this country. They are happy to give still more to the rich and take it away from the poor, which, of course, is what they have been doing ever since they were elected in 1979. We know that the best way to help low-income families is to increase child benefit. Even the Conservative Women's Organisation wants to save the child benefit. It has joined with many other organisations in campaigning to persuade the Government to increase child benefit as the most effective way of combating low income family poverty.

However, the Government gave a miserly 10p increase in child benefit, at the same time as the insulting increase of 40p a week for pensioners. Cutting the basic tax rate and lifting personal allowances is the least effective way of combating poverty. The Government know this. Every organisation that is concerned with poverty knows it, and yet the Government continue along the same course.

I hope that the Government will come to see that what we need are not further cuts in basic taxation but substantial and sustained increases in child benefit as the best way of giving substantial extra amounts of money to low-income families, who will spend that money, and thereby stimulate the economy as a whole and local economies in particular.

The Budget has done nothing to help manufacturing industry. We were looking for a positive strategy that would assist manufacturing industry, particularly through lower interest rates and a low exchange rate.

My chamber of commerce has conducted continuing surveys of local companies, and every survey has shown that the two biggest constraints on business in Bradford over the past 24 months have been high interest rates and high exchange rates. This Budget has done very little to assist manufacturers in my city, and they have already said so in reports published in the *Telegraph and Argus* yesterday. Certainly it is not creating a situation whereby they can look with confidence to increased orders, still less to taking on more employees.

Bradford is a city suffering immense problems. It is a very proud city, and we are very independent, gritty people, who want to help ourselves, but we have reached a situation where we shall not be able to arrest the spiral of decline that faces our city unless there is Government intervention, substantial amounts of Government resources, and sustained Government assistance.

The biggest employer is the local council. We are now facing substantial cuts in the rate support grant, which has led in part to a substantial increase in rates of 30 per cent. The largest party on Bradford council is the Conservative group, which is supported by the Liberal-SDP alliance. We have seen also the cost of the measure abolishing the county councils. These factors have led to a 30 per cent. rate increase.

The second biggest employer is the university of Bradford. In 1981, the cuts in higher education resulted in a large number of redundancies, a reduction in students, and the closure of three university departments. They also took £6 million out of the local economy. Cuts over the next three years, estimated at 3 per cent. a year, will take further enormous amounts of money out of the local economy, as will the mere 2 per cent. increase in student grants. Increasing pensions and other benefits by less than the rate of inflation will mean yet more money going out of the local economy.

Last Friday, I attended the inauguration of Sir John Harvey-Jones, chairman of ICI, as the new chancellor of the university. The House will remember that about 18 months ago he was very vocal in challenging the Government's view that the expansion of the service industry would compensate for the loss of manufacturing industry, and last Friday he was critical of the Government's education policy, particularly in respect of higher education. A number of other speakers, including the vice-chancellor, were equally critical of the Government's approach.

It is a scandal that Bradford university will be closing its physics department. This university, together with Aston and Salford, faced enormous cuts in 1981. The Government tell us almost daily of their belief in support for technological advance. How can they reconcile those claims with cuts in higher education generally and massive cuts in particular in technological universities? It is lunacy.

West Yorkshire has the lowest wages of any urban area in the United Kingdom, but people still have the audacity to say that if only workers accepted lower wages they would price themselves into employment. How can that be true when, in an area of traditionally very low wages, we have well above the national average of unemployment? These are the economics of the madhouse. It is unbelieveable that the Government are daily trying to persuade all of us that if only people would accept low wages there would be more jobs and more job security. If that were true in Bradford, we would have some of the lowest levels of unemployment instead of some of the highest.

The impact of the social security review will be not only to reduce the incomes of the poorest—the pensioners, the disabled, the unemployed, the single-parent families and many others—but to take massive sums of money out of the local economy, reduce demand and exaggerate and intensify our problems. We want a reversal of those problems, so that we get more resources into the local economy, stimulate demand, the opportunities for jobs and the expansion of industry to produce more goods and services. We are trapped in a spiral decline. We have seen massive job losses in manufacturing industry, particularly textiles, but we are not seeing job opportunities in service industries to compensate for those job losses.

Our population is growing. We are not unduly optimistic about the prospects of attracting new industry into the city. A recently published major report said that the main hope must be to expand existing industries rather than attract new industries to greenfield sites.

We want support from the Government, and priorities that give the utmost support to inner cities, such as Bradford, which are facing enormous and grotesque problems. We do not want tea and sympathy, although Ministers visit us almost daily to give us that. We want action and money and resources to help us. We want to see jobs, housing and schools.

At the moment, teachers are delivering letters to the homes of 650 pupils at the Belle Vue school, in my constituency, saying:

> "We are seriously worried about lack of money in education. At this school we are desperately short of room and the heating in the winter is very poor."

Bradford probably had more publicity over the past two years about the controversy over the head teacher at Drummond middle school, Ray Honeyford, than we have had in any other comparable controversy. Many of the people who campaigned for that head teacher's right to free speech are not now campaigning to improve the fabric and conditions of schools, including the one involved, although I would welcome it if they did.

Most of the schools in my constituency were built when Queen Victoria was on the throne. They are falling down, leaking and in an appalling condition, and they are not fit places in which to try to give the best possible education to our children and the generations of children to come. We lack the resources to deal with the schools, environmental and infrastructure problems—the enormous problems of dereliction and trying to clear away old buildings.

The Chancellor spoke about Britain now being a property-owning democracy and said that he wanted it to become a share-owning democracy. As my quotation from the editorial of my local newspaper shows, such aspirations are as remote from the perspective of my constituents as if the Chancellor had been speaking from Mars. The thought that many of my constituents will be able to invest £200 a month is ludicrous, as were some of the other remarks in the Budget speech.

The Government have stolen millions upon millions of pounds from Bradford by cutting the money that they give to local authorities to support services. Overall, the cut is 17 per cent. The Government have stolen a great deal from Bradford pensioners, the unemployed, the disabled and single parents by a cut in benefits or by not increasing them by more than the increase in the cost of living. They have stolen money by not giving more in housing investment and something to deal with the structurally defective buildings and many other problems to which I have referred. The people of Bradford have no reason to thank the Chancellor for this Budget, and that is simply because it has done nothing for them.

7.37 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) called for lower interest and exchange rates, which he said were badly needed. As he has got both those things—interest rates have already fallen and will fall further and the exchange rate against the deutschmark has moved down dramatically, as it has against all other currencies except the dollar—I would have expected him to recognise those benefits, although he had many criticisms and strong feelings about the state

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of the city that he represents. In a way, that was a good example of how some of the Government's critics, who can always pick on particular points when things have not gone well, have got into a flywheel state, where the criticism spins on like some tired cassette without them recognising that we are moving into a new economic situation in which manufacturing is expanding, industrial relations are vastly improving and the potential for growth is great. We are achieving something that the Labour Goverment said could never be achieved—they failed to achieve it themselves—steady expansion with inflation low and falling.

I want to pick out at this late hour in the debate one particular aspect of the argument. Through all the criticisms of the Government's current policy there has run the view that tax cuts do not help the unemployed. Indeed, the whole of the speech by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) was made as though these were two completely separate things. The same idea ran through the speech of the hon. Member for Bradford, West. I wish totally to repudiate that view. I do not rule out the case for more local government capital receipts being spent, and I wish that there had been more room for that in the Budget. But to argue that is the only way forward and to shut one's eyes to the immense power of tax cuts to wage war on unemployment and poverty is to be absolutely blind to what is happening in economies in the rest of the world and to what is happening in our economy as well. The more one looks at the world, the more obvious it is that there is a very detailed correlation between lower taxes and more jobs.

In the United States the number of jobs created in January was a staggering 565,000, of which 75 per cent. were in the service sector. In that economy jobs have been increasing at the rate of 355,000 a month since the middle of last year. There are other examples also, of which, of course, Japan is the classic one. Its total tax take is more than 10 per cent. below the tax take of the United Kingdom and its unemployment rate is 2·8 per cent.

The message seems to me to be one that can only be ignored by simply insisting that the facts of today's world economy do not exist.

Tax cuts do help jobs, in particular—this is the point I want to concentrate on—the kind of tax reductions which enlarge personal savings, encourage small enterprise and self-employment and, above all, extend personal ownership and pride in ownership. The motivations for enterprise and towards the social obligations that go with ownership are, above all, the forces that are going to help most to create a fully occupied society, which of course we have got to achieve and want to achieve. One proposition we hear is that this can be done by creating a million jobs through public works expenditure, and so on. Maybe there is some truth in the argument for capital spending, but to ignore the influence of tax cuts is to try to stand a chair on two legs, which of course will not succeed.

Ownership tax incentives are immensely valuable and powerful and help all communities, including the community about which the hon. Member for Bradford, West has just been speaking, to begin to create within themselves the seeds of business, enterprise, job opportunities and occupations which have been so sadly missing in so many of our rundown city areas.

That is why I welcome enormously the strong emphasis in this Budget on enlarging personal ownership of all kinds, and welcome in particular the personal equity plan scheme. I must confess to my right hon. and hon. Friends that when I first heard the Chancellor speaking about it I thought for one moment that we were really going for a scheme allowing every wage and salary earner to put, tax-free, £2,400 into a personal investment pool. That really would have been a Loi Monory and that is the kind of way we want to go. This is not a fantasy; other countries have done it, so that millions of workers can share in the wealth of the nation in which they work. Although we have not been able to go that far yet—and the PEP is an excellent first step—we must be quite clear that these objectives are obtainable in the future. I am very glad that the Budget contains that proposal.

I want to put a few further thoughts to my right hon. and hon. Friends about the next steps in this vital drive for wider ownership, which I believe should be the major social goal of a Conservative Government in the 1980s and 1990s, and I hope that is the way that my right hon. and hon. Friends are thinking.

First, we have to be clear about the different paths to wider ownership that need to be pursued, possibly together, because they are not necessarily alternatives.

There is the question of profit sharing, which the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), speaking for the SDP, mentioned. I know that his party is keen on such things. The Budget contains proposals, which I gather the Chancellor is now discussing with industry, for seeing whether profit-related payments can be built into the wage system. We are years behind other countries on this. Japan has a system under which one quarter of all wages is paid in bonus, and that bonus is discretionary, and in some cases it attracts tax privileges. I think in the next phase we should be looking towards a tax privilege, a tax incentive, being related to the bonus rather than just, as at present, to employee shares. At the moment, if employee shares are given, tax privileges arise. Income tax is not paid, nor is capital gains tax, if the shares are held a certain time. So it should be for the bonus idea. It certainly has an amazing effect in encouraging the taking on of new workers. Some very interesting ideas are now circulating, originating largely in America and Japan, on the power of the bonus system in wage settlements, in expanding employment, in encouraging the taking on of more people and, of course, in motivating the work force.

Secondly, there is the whole area of ideas related to wider ownership of shares. Here I really must take issue with the hon. Member for Bradford, West. It is not an idea just for the elite. That is really a very old-fashioned, quaint belief. We are talking about the potential for millions of families to have a stake in the country in which they live. It is very interesting that, when the British Telecom issue was organised, 26 per cent. of the adult population, I am told, made inquiries about buying shares. That means that 11 million people were interested in becoming owners as well as earners. I think that we should now aim, through our policies, at establishing at least that number of people who are familiar with the ownership of shares and equity in the industry of this country. I should like to see incentives not merely for those who are lucky enough to be employees in firms where shares are handed out, but for everybody, including public sector workers, to become shareholders in this nation.

We can do much better. Neighbouring economies have done much better and there are many more people involved in sharing the growing wealth which inevitably develops as industry becomes more capital-intensive and more based on knowledge and high technology.

Thirdly, there is the idea of citizen ownership, which Samuel Brittan has written about in the *Financial Times* very interestingly. This broadly means that shares should be distributed by the Government free or at a very low cost to millions of people. It is an idea that I have tried out in the past on some of my colleagues, but I did not get anywhere. That should certainly be considered, possibly based on the idea of bearer bonds.

In the 1960s and the mid-1970s we looked at a plan in British Columbia, Canada, where they had distributed shares in the major utilities to every citizen, and we saw how that worked. It did not bring immediate benefit to all the citizens of British Columbia, but it is an idea for involving people in a far better way than any kind of centralist Socialism and nationalisation, and all that outdated nonsense.

The fourth idea is one that my hon. Friends have pushed for very hard in recent years—to widen the ownership of small business. That is the living expression of ownership, and I am glad that so many measures have been pushed through to create this. I am also glad that the enterprise allowance has been reformed slightly. I did not like the way that it was working before, and I am delighted to hear that the tax anomaly is to be corrected.

We must now move further on this front. This is the area in which for two decades now some of us have been arguing that the major thrust is required to move away from the dead hand of collectivism and the nationalised compassion which has been bound up in the outdated welfare state. The areas in which we now need to make progress are the following.

First, we should go further towards substantial tax relief for every wage and salary earner for putting money aside for personal investment, not necessarily investment that is lost in the great institutions, but investment where there is a personal connection—investment ideally in small and rather localised business. A lot more could be done at local level to encourage the link between saving and new jobs and investment.

Secondly, we need to transform the input into our education system as far as business is concerned so that children really understand how enterprise works, how a capital-owning society operates and what the opportunities are for them in that kind of society. That is changing a bit, but there is still too much emphasis on the idea that somehow the jobs will be provided by somebody else or manufactured by the state, which really means that millions of people have to pay taxes to subsidise other people on low incomes.

Thirdly, we need to see a social dimension in this whole area, by which I mean far more encouragement of those who have capital and savings to fulfil their social obligations by doing voluntary work, helping charities, giving, caring and generally filling in the bits and pieces of a sensitive caring society that the welfare state has failed to do. That is why I am delighted at the measure in the Budget which directs people's attention towards charities, and which allows them to deduct from their payroll a small annual amount to give to voluntary work. That is a step in the right direction and part of the jigsaw—the new pattern for the future.

Fourthly, if we are to have more capital owners in a more flexible society with opportunities for small business job creation, part-time jobs and all the things that will grow—it is no use the Labour party saying that that is the wrong direction because that will be the pattern of the future — society will need to be supported by good public services. We are learning that many public services can be better organised on a privatised, decentralised basis. We thought that telephones, water systems and big public services could be run only centrally, but that turns out to be wrong. Nevertheless, the undelegated services that remain with the Government should be properly supported. If the railway system cannot be privatised, I should hate to see it run down. It should be better supported. Similarly, I should hate to see other basic services inadequately supported. The priorities should be clear. Earlier one hon. Member called for more expenditure on roads and hospitals. The roads programme is already enormous, and so is the hospital building programme, so I doubt whether extra capital spending is needed there. But more is needed in other areas, and I was sorry that there was not sufficient emphasis on that in the Budget.

We need not only the enterprise culture, of which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer spoke, but an ownership culture. We are sorry to see a further steady expansion in the real economy. It is happening now, and it will continue in the coming year. However, it will tend to be concentrated on capital growth; and it is essential for the Conservative party to recognise the need for the benefits of that capital growth to be spread, not concentrated. Wealth must be spread. Inevitably we shall see this new kind of growth in expanding rewards for capital-intensive industry, not so much in factory jobs of the old-fashioned sort of the 1950s and 1960s.

The key social goal of Tory party policy in the 1990s should be to achieve mass ownership and to disperse power and wealth to the people. I hope that next year's Budget will take us a long way further down that road.

7.52 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): I shall not follow the line of the right hon. Member Guildford (Mr. Howell); I shall pursue the line of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) in his opening speech. My hon. Friend showed clearly the Government's failure yet again to use the opportunity of the 1986 Budget to tackle the real problems facing us, and to take positive initiatives to get people back to work and to deal with the unacceptable unemployment position. Tory Members often fail to listen closely to what we in the Labour party say. My hon. Friend made it clear that the Labour party neither believed nor claimed that it could get 4 million people back to work in traditional industries, or that the measures that it would take to put money back into the economy would put everybody back to work in the lifetime of the next Labour Government. He made it clear that we would have to take many measures to distribute the work and wealth available.

There is one major difference between the two main political parties. The Labour party accepts that we shall never employ as many people as we did a few years ago in manufacturing industry and many other areas because of new technology, and that new technology must certainly be used in our industries if we are to compete in the market places of the world. The major difference is that

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we believe that we must ensure that the whole of society benefits from that change and that there is not an elite in work whose standard of living continues to grow while the standard of living of the unemployed, the retired, the sick and the disabled not only fails to maintain its present level, but ultimately starts to decline. If the Conservative party continues to pursue its present policies, we shall face that position in the not too distant future.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), in a powerful speech, described how the Budget would affect the people of Bradford. The same case may be argued for constituency after constituency. The Budget has failed to tackle our problems, and once again is disastrous for the majority of people. I accept that this year the Chancellor of the Exchequer did not describe the Budget as a "Budget for jobs". Indeed, if Ministers were liable for prosecution under the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 the Chancellor would have been the first of many to face legal action for his false representation of the 1985 Budget.

When the Chancellor presented this year's Budget, he said that the aim was to concentrate the benefits of his limited room for manoeuvre following the oil price collapse

"not on the rich but on the great majority of ordinary taxpayers."
—[*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol 94, c. 183.]

The Budget fails to live up to his comments. It is a Budget for those in work. It does not try to get people back to work. It does nothing to remove the barrier and widening rift that exists between the south and the north. Some places in the north may be prosperous, and some areas in inner London may be deprived, but on balance the north is deprived and the south is prosperous. It is time that we sought to eliminate and reduce that widening rift.

Today the Paymaster General referred to additional expenditure and described what the Government were doing regarding health. In my constituency ambulances cannot run people to hospital for outpatient treatment, because they are on a quota system, and once they have used their allocation of quota no ambulances are available. Even emergency ambulances are stretched to the limit. Two hospitals are proposed for closure. While I accept that Burnley general hospital is to have an extension, that extension gives the Government and the National Health Service an opportunity to use the old premises to ensure that those on waiting lists and those needing geriatric care are given the necessary care and attention.

The Paymaster General referred to my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), and quoted him as having made promises all over the country at various meetings about what the Labour Government will do—and a Labour Government will be elected at the general election. Once again, the Paymaster General failed to listen carefully to what my hon. Friend and other Labour party Members have said. We were fortunate to have my hon. Friend speaking at a public meeting in Burnley recently. While he made the Labour party's priorities clear, he was careful to make it absolutely clear that, because of the mess that we shall inherit from this Government, we cannot make promises to do everything that we should like to do during the lifetime of one Labour Government. The Opposition recognise that five years will not be sufficient to repair all the damage done by this Government.

The move to assist charities is welcome, but the proposals about VAT could have gone further. However, that is a move in the right direction, and the provision to allow companies to make one-off payments is also an attractive feature. I hope we shall see companies responding to that and taking the opportunity to make donations to charities. Of course, that money will be in addition to the covenanting payments that companies are already able to make.

The capital transfer tax on lifetime gifts is to be abolished and replaced by an inheritance tax. Few people in my constituency will benefit from that. It is a totally wrong move, and one made to assist the wealthy. It is not acceptable. The Government should think again.

The Government should spend more money on housing and improving the infrastructure. The £935 million that they are using to reduce income tax over and above the rates fixed by indexation could have been used for those purposes and would have been a small step in the right direction. The Paymaster General said that not many people work on the construction of sewers. I accept that may be true, but he fails to recognise that the materials used to carry out that work are important. While the work on sewers may be minimal, it would put other people back to work making the materials.

The Paymaster General also said that the Federation of Master Builders was unable to recruit the type of labour that it required. He spoke about general labour, but especially skilled craftsmen. Some employers are unable to recruit the skilled workmen they need because of Government cuts in the last few years. We no longer have the apprentices getting the training that they require, and in a few years that will be a major problem.

Until financial pressures were put upon them, the direct labour organisations of local authorities were the biggest single organisations in the building industry that gave craftsmen training in joinery and plastering and other types of building trades. Direct labour organisations had a tremendous record of training craftsmen and tradesmen. The Paymaster General should not take at face value what the Federation of Master Builders has said. That information should be considered much more closely.

Just two weeks ago in the House of Commons representatives from the Confederation of British Industry in the north-west met Labour Members from the north-west and separately a number of Conservative Members of Parliament. The CBI was quite clear in saying what the priorities in the Budget should be. It said that at least £1 billion should be used to get people back to work. Its representatives did not believe that income tax should be a priority. They were quite clear that, if there were to be cuts in income tax, the adjustment should be to the threshold, not to the basic rate. The Government have failed to take the opportunity to do that and have chosen to reduce the basic rate by one penny at a cost of £935 million in 1986-87 over and above the statutory indexation.

The cut of a penny in income tax is nonsense. The Government should not have moved in that direction. The benefits for the ordinary working person as a result of that cut are minimal, and the money could be better used for house building and repairs. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West, I have people in my constituency who cannot get repair or improvement grants for their houses. Council houses are deteriorating, and there are many problems that this £935 million could have

been used to solve. By spending it to solve those problems we could have got people back to work. If we had to have an income tax adjustment over and above indexation—I say "if" because that is not a priority—it should have been an adjustment to the threshold. That would have been of greater benefit to lower paid people.

The right hon. and learned Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) talked about graduated rates and different bands of income tax. Perhaps for the first part of taxable income we should have a lower rate, because that again would benefit lower paid people. However, that is not a priority. Perhaps we could think about it when more money is available because it is nonsense to adjust the basic rate to 29p rather than to have a lower intermediate rate. As a result of the Budget, the public sector borrowing requirement is set at £7 million, or 1·75 per cent. of gross domestic product. Bearing in mind the problems facing us, that figure is ridiculous.

Hon. Members on the Government side have said several times during the debate that the Labour party should lay the cost of its programme before the House. When the Conservative party faced the 1979 and 1983 elections it never said to the electorate that the country would end up with 3 million people out of work or that to control inflation it would cut public expenditure and hit most those who are deprived. Our poorest people are the ones that this Government have hurt most of all. They are the people living in the most deprived areas and they have suffered as a result of this Government's policies.

We will make our plans clear to the country before the next election, but the Conservatives should spell out exactly what they intend to do. I should like them to tell the people what they will do when they have disposed of all our publicly owned assets. British Telecom has already gone, and another of our assets is British Gas. By selling those assets the Government get an income for one year and use it either to benefit the taxpayers or for public expenditure. Once that money has been used, it has gone and cannot be used again.

One could go home this weekend and sell the gas cooker and the fridge and have a good weekend out, but the sale of those things would be regretted the following week. This Government will regret the disposal of our assets. It is not only the asset that goes but the income from it, and that income is lost not just for one year, but for year after year. On British Gas alone we are talking of a present benefit on profit of £1·5 billion each year. The Government will eliminate that asset and put it into private hands.

The Budget dealt with the extension of the pilot scheme for the long-term unemployed. Burnley was one of the enterprise areas. That extension is a welcome move, although the £40 a week the applicants receive is perhaps too small when related to the £1,000 that each applicant has to find. That will be a deterrent to some people entering the scheme. The scheme has certainly had considerable success in Burnley, but it will not solve the problem of unemployment. If the Government believe that it will, they are under an illusion. I believe that that figure should be increased from £40 a week, and that the period should be extended, because many people start to run into difficulties just at the time when the state scheme stops supporting them. The new workers scheme subsidy pays employers £15 a week for all 18 to 19-year-olds if they are paid a wage of up to £55 a week. The Government are again attempting to limit wage levels, and they have often said that low pay is better than no pay. It is significant that the Shops Bill, which is now being considered, contains a clause which removes some of the restrictions. Of course, I accept that the other place has made an important amendment to the Bill. Nevertheless, it is being introduced at the same time as the Wages Bill, which will also remove a lot of protection for the lower paid.

The Government have once again got their policies wrong. They have not faced the issues before us in 1986. They should make more money available to tackle the problems of housing, and the difficulties facing our hospitals as well as all the major problems that exist in areas such as those represented by my hon. Friends and myself. That would put people back to work. That is what the Government should be doing instead of giving handouts to the wealthy.

In 1979, the Conservative Government's first act was to reduce the top tax band from 83p to 60p. That is nonsense. The sands of time are running out for them. They should face the difficulties in Britain in 1986 and get people back to work instead of paying lip service to our problems.

8.11 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): The crudity of the Budget analysis given by the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) gives me some hope. I am no economist, but even I can probably do better. To my innocent mind, there is a considerable difference between selling my gas cooker, which means that I shall no longer have one, and the Government changing the ownership of the national gas network, which means that we can still enjoy gas.

Anything that I say about this Budget has to be set against a background of considerable admiration for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor for having dealt with a sudden, swingeing loss of £5·5 billion without rocking the stability of the economy. I do not believe that any other Chancellor could lay claim to such an amazing feat, and I admire him very much.

Debates on the Budget always seem to be an opportunity to lay out the ground for the next Budget. I have three points to raise. My first concerns skill shortages. My second concerns the difficult question of the mixture between private gain and public programmes, and my third involves small firms. However, as other hon. Members wish to speak, I shall be as brief as possible.

Skill shortages are already with us in, for example, electro-mechanical engineering, the teaching of maths and physics and in information technology skills. However, I must admit that the expansion of the information technology industry is limited more by a public lack of understanding than by any shortage of people capable of meeting those needs.

Who really cares about such shortages? The Butcher report is a sign that the Government are at least concerned to some degree. It is true that the Manpower Services Commission recently told the Employment Committee that it was doing its best to collect and assimilate information on skill shortages and to provide job training in areas of acute skill shortages, and of course the infant Open Tech is also being nurtured, but those are minor points. Today, I checked who was collecting information, and I was staggered to be told by the Engineering Employers Federation that that was not one of its concerns.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will consider the short-term palliative of greater mobility for

[Mr. Andrew Rowe]

skilled workers who cannot put their skills into practice because they cannot find anywhere to live. I realise that that is not the direct concern of the Department of Employment or of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, as it involves housing problems. However, I very much hope that the private rented sector will be re-emphasised, with proper safeguards against Rachman-like landlords. Those who sell their houses for £15,000 or £30,000 in order to move to areas with high employment find that they cannot afford to buy a house, and so return home disenchanted because they cannot take their families with them.

The Select Committee visited Alfred Marks and learnt that the price payable for work processing skills was so far in excess of that payable for simple typewriting skills that it paid Alfred Marks to install a training programme so that temps could learn how to use word processors. Of course, the pay-off time is short, as is the training time, so everyone can see the immediate benefit. Indeed, I am sure that there is no need for the Government to intervene in that area.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): Is the hon. Gentleman not amazed that the Government should have introduced a new workers scheme in the Budget which gives such substantial subsidies to employers who employ young people without any strings being attached and without training being necessary? Those young people need not be trained throughout that period of employment.

Mr. Rowe: I am sympathetic to the Government as they are in a tremendous dilemma. If too many strings are attached to the provisions for young workers, employers just will not take them on. But I hope to argue that we should increase the incentive and, to some extent, the strings in order to make people accept responsibility for training. I wonder whether there is scope in some of the more difficult areas of training—where the pay-off is slower or the training is longer—for a tax benefit for upgrading skills. After all, we get tax benefits as individuals for upgrading our houses and for upgrading our pensions, so it is not entirely incongruous to try to work out a system of tax benefits for upgrading our skills, particularly in areas of skill shortages.

Furthermore, the means for much of that provision is at hand. I have spoken on this subject before, but I did not elicit any serious rejoinder. Nevertheless, I shall try again. Many people own home videos and so there is a great opportunity to use them for self improvement. The video tape is an extraordinary instrument, because it is expensive to make but incredibly cheap to copy. Moreover, it can be copied by transmission via the television set, and so can be copied anywhere. The Government should seriously consider establishing some means whereby a copyright-free training video programme could be introduced under the auspices of the Open University—which I know is of interest to the hon. Member for Huddersfield—or under the auspices of the Open Tech. That serious suggestion is worth taking up. It does not really matter whether people pirate those videos at home, but it is not on for teachers to pirate the copyright, and we should try to do something about that.

We need to know where our skills shortages are now and, as far as possible, where they are likely to be in future. That is a difficult but necessary task. We must urgently tackle the problem of those shortages because the upswing in the economy, which we are all confident will arrive, will be strangled by such shortages. We can identify them now and we ought to be dealing with them on a crash basis.

Private gain is a difficult and complex subject. Substitution of private sector jobs by public subsidy jobs is a real danger, especially with the huge programmes being implemented by the Manpower Services Commission. There is, however, scope for more participation — for example, in the community programme—by private employers. At present only 2 per cent. of community programme schemes have private sector participation. I know that the MSC and the CBI are examining that. We must be bold in this matter. If private firms fight shy of inner city sites because of the level of dereliction, why should we abuse the community programme by bringing those sites up to a standard at which they would be attractive enough to the private sector to take them on? We should not be afraid of helping private firms to prosper. Rather we should be afraid that by using public money to subsidise some private firms they are then able to destroy others. That is a difficult balance to strike, but I believe that it is a priority area and I hope that the Government will address themselves to it.

The Budget has been very helpful for small firms. I am delighted at the continuation of the loan guarantee scheme. I played a small part in its introduction. It was proposed in the face of considerable scepticism from the banks and others. It has played a major role in launching small firms and in educating the financial institutions about the importance of the small firms sector.

I welcome the continuation of the business expansion scheme on a permanent basis. However, I am sorry that there has not been a bold move on training for small firms. I still do not understand why the financial institutions, particularly the clearing banks, take so little interest in the training record of their debtors. They value the machinery, the property and the owner's home, but they do nothing to value the quality of the staff, which is the most expensive item.

My suggestions for personal tax relief for individuals could perhaps be paralleled by a tax relief for companies with a good training record. I am tired of financial institutions pleading that it is not their job to play any role in improving the quality of management in the businesses to which they lend money. If it is not their job, whose job is it? They have access to the firms and power over them. For them to say that they do not understand enough about the running of small businesses to help them is a dereliction of duty.

I shall take the Minister close to home. Small firms complain bitterly about their customers' slowness in paying bills. That has a direct effect on their ability to employ staff. I must tell the Government that the Government Departments are often as bad at that as anyone else. If codes of conduct or letters of encouragement do not improve the situation, should we not try penalties?

We have heard about vacant properties and unused land, but I remind the Government that the DOE survey shows that central Government have the largest number of longstanding vacant properties and still own a huge property bank. These matters are under the direct control

of the Treasury as the establishment officer for the Civil Service. I hope that my right hon. Friend will do everything to ensure that the Treasury exercises that duty.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The winding-up speeches are expected to begin at about 9.20 pm. At least six hon. Members still wish to speak, and I hope that speeches will be brief so that all those hon. Members can make their contributions before the Front Bench speeches begin.

8.24 pm

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): I apologise for having missed the opening speeches, but I was delayed in Committee Room 12 dealing with that paltry, squalid little Bill that the Government introduced, the Wages Bill. It is aimed at those at the bottom of the wages ladder, and is more or less in line with the theme of the Budget proposals.

I shall follow the line adopted by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) who spoke about our region, the northern region, which over the past eight years has suffered because of restructuring, unemployment and, now, the social problems that have been caused by many of the Government's policies. For example, the northern region has lost 230,000 jobs over the past eight years, which is 18 per cent., or almost one in five of employees. Some 34 per cent. of manufacturing jobs have been lost, which totals 146,000 jobs. That means that one in three of the work force employed in the manufacturing industry have lost their jobs. A total of 50 per cent. of construction jobs have been lost, and house building is down by 50 per cent. Public sector house building has been reduced by two thirds and road construction works are being delayed. However, there are thousands of construction workers on the dole. Ours is one of the only regions to have suffered a decline in service employment. In 1984 9,000 fewer people were employed in the service industries in the northern region than in 1977.

The Chancellor could have done something to alleviate the problems in the northern region with the £935 million that he has given in tax concessions. He could have made sure that tourism there was improved. In 1983 the value of tourism in the northern region was £250 million. The Chancellor could have made sure that the regional tourist boards were allocated a significant increase in resources for marketing and development.

Total unemployment in the northern region has moved from 8 per cent. to 19 per cent. Male unemployment rose from 10 per cent. to 23 per cent., and the percentage of long-term unemployed has doubled. Of that long-term unemployed in the northern region, 29 per cent. are youngsters under 25 years of age. In my constituency 43·1 per cent. of the unemployed have been out of work for more than a year. Those 3,585 men and women have experienced the humiliation and despair of repeatedly being rejected for a place among the work force. There are 40-year-olds in my constituency who can see no future as they will be unable to get another job during their working lifetimes. That is the situation in the northern region and in my constituency, yet very little, if anything, has been done for them in the Budget. The Chancellor could have done so much with the £935 million to assist regions and constituencies such as mine instead of knocking a penny off the basic rate of income tax.

The worst unemployment black spots are in the northern region. The five worst in England — South Tyneside, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Bishop Auckland and Sunderland — are in the northern region. South Tyneside is the worst unemployment black spot in Great Britain. My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) and I have repeatedly asked the Minister to redesignate South Tyneside, because of the high unemployment and the social problems, from a programmed authority to a partnership authority, but to no avail. There has been a 57 per cent. reduction in real terms in Government regional assistance to industry in the northern region, and average household incomes are the lowest in the United Kingdom.

The Budget has done nothing to help people in the northern region if one considers what the Chancellor has given in tax concessions. A married couple with a total income of £4,000 will be 67p a week better off, yet those with an income of £50,000 a year will be £8·79 a week better off. The Chancellor has made matters worse through his Budget.

The north-south divide is increasing every month under this Government. There are 23 redundancies per thousand in the northern region, whereas in the south-east there are only five for every thousand. In the south-east the unemployment rates in 1985 were 10 per cent., and in the northern region they were nearly double that at 19 per cent. The percentage of those who became unemployed between April and July was 6·5 per cent. for the northern region and in the south-east 3·9 per cent. The change in average weekly household incomes compared with the United Kingdom average between 1977 and 1985 was plus 4 per cent. for the south-east and minus 8 per cent. for the northern region.

Between 1976-77 and 1983-84 school-leavers going on to full-time education in the south-east rose by an average of 6 per cent,. and in the northern region fell by 29 per cent. Under this Government we have two nations. We have the north-south divide, which was so forcefully described by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West.

Local authorities in the northern region which try to help to generate employment, even working with the private sector, are being severely hampered by the penal effects of the Government's block grant system.

In view of the huge restructuring that is taking place in the northern region, it is imperative that the remaining key industries such as steel, coal, shipbuilding, heavy engineering and machine tool manufacturing should be protected by the Government. It is nonsense that a shipyard worker should be put on the dole at a cost to the Treasury of £6,000 per annum when he could be kept in work building ships that are required. In that industry we are being outmanoeuvred by countries that subsidise their shipbuilding industries.

The Chancellor could have provided support for small firms in our region. Support is being restricted by the 40 per cent. EC limit on public sector support. In our area 30 per cent. of the work force is employed in small firms, as against 47 per cent. in the south-east.

The North of England County Councils Association has a conference tomorrow to announce its regional policy — the state-of-the-region report. The association has, since 1979, repeatedly asked the Government to do something for our region. We need a Minister of Cabinet rank to express the needs of the English assisted regions.

[Mr. Don Dixon]

Why should the Scottish and the Welsh have a Secretary of State with Cabinet rank when the English regions have not? Why should we not have a Minister in the Cabinet to speak up for regional development and support?

There should be increased resources for infrastructure and support for the EC programmes, not as a substitute for them. There should be increased funding for new technology, telecommunications and research and development projects. There should be greater recognition of the region's needs in regional industrial policy. There should be special employment measures and support for training.

We lost the Killingworth skillcentre. The hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) talked about training. There is now no skillcentre between the Tyne and Edinburgh because of the Government's decision to close the Killingworth skillcentre. The dispersal of Government officers and research establishments to the region would assist the area. All those measures have been asked for over the years, but little has been done.

The Government should recognise the value of local authorities. Tyne and Wear, an effective job creation authority, has been abolished by the Government. Other local authorities are hampered by the block grant restrictions. There should be increased spending on housing and health facilities. The Black report pointed out that South Tyneside district council, in my constituency, was one of the 10 worst in the country, yet we are being starved of resources.

The housing investment programme allocation for South Tyneside this year is £6·5 million. To maintain the real value of 1979 it would have to be £27 million. Yet the local authority has £6·5 million to deal with all of its housing problems. Asbestos has been found in a block of flats for which the council has a modernisation programme which is due to be carried out next year. Because of the restriction on the money available for housing, the local authority cannot bring that programme forward to coincide with the work that has to be done to remove the asbestos.

The Chancellor and the Government could have done many things to help our region. It requires support more than any other region because of its particular problems, most of which are the result of the Government's policies. The other night during a debate on the EC, I suggested that the northern region should be treated as a priority area, because our social and unemployment problems are as bad as those in Northern Ireland, the only priority area in the United Kingdom. The Chancellor should have taken that into account in the Budget.

The Select Committee on Employment produced a good report on long-term unemployment. It put forward positive suggestions to help the 750,000 people who have lost hope and the will to work because they have been unemployed for so long. Yet that report has been ignored. Indeed, the Paymaster General tried to rubbish it before it was even officially published.

The Government could do many things rather than taking a penny off the standard rate of income tax in order to help the people in our area who are unemployed and deprived, which the Government apparently think nothing about.

8.36 pm

Mr. Roger Freeman (Kettering): I hope that the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) will forgive me if I do not pursue his line of thinking about the northern region. It is not because I do not understand and sympathise with the unemployment problems in the north-east. My constituency in Northamptonshire is, comparatively, much more fortunate with an unemployment rate of only 9 per cent.

I want to concentrate my remarks on the taxation of savings and investment. I appreciate that for a person who has no job talk of the reform of taxation of savings and investment is not directly relevant. Nevertheless, I want to follow the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner) in commenting briefly tonight on the Budget's provisions for savings and investments.

I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General will pursue with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer the idea of discussions with industry on the introduction of profit-sharing schemes. That is crucial and could be important for employment prospects. I say that as a former employer. If we had the taxation incentive whereby part of the overall remuneration came in the way of a profit-sharing arrangement with the firm—a bonus pact—I am sure that an employer would be more flexible in taking on additional staff when times were better because the employer would not be building in the high fixed costs that can often follow if one has to pay comparatively high rates of standard pay plus overtime. I welcome that initiative. One route that my right hon. Friend might pursue is to limit the national insurance contributions for the employer and the employee to the basic salary, leaving some concession for the national insurance contribution on the profit share or bonus payment.

I welcome the Budget as being another step in the right direction towards share ownership. By that I mean not only the broader spread of the ownership of assets in Britain but the direct control of those assets by individuals rather than through institutions.

The privatisation of British Telecom was a marvellous opportunity, which has been fulfilled, in the spread of ownership of shares. I hope that some of the reforms—two in particular—will encourage that process even further. I welcome the reduction in stamp duty from 1 per cent. to 0·5 per cent. Next year, I hope that the Chancellor will abolish it. It is a tax on savings, investment and trading. I do not believe that it should have a permanent place in the Chancellor's armoury of taxation. Many investors—now, fortunately, without exchange control—can make investments in other markets and in other exchanges where there is no stamp duty.

I welcome the personal equity plan, although I agree with the suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate that, instead of allowing a husband and wife a concession of £4,800 a year of investment in a personal equity plan and the capital gains and dividends income rolling out tax-free, a more modest concession of £500 of investment, could be made out of pre-tax income similar to the Loi Monory. That would have a more direct beneficial effect on the spread of share ownership. Nevertheless, the proposals in the Budget are welcome.

I notice from the Red Book, when trying to calculate what the officials have estimated the take-up rate will be in the fiscal year 1987-88, that the constant of the scheme

is shown at £25 million for the full tax year. I have calculated, making modest assumptions about dividend yield and rates of taxation on the individuals who take part, that it is equivalent to £1 billion worth of equity investment. That could account for perhaps 500,000 new shareholders with a concession of say £2,000 worth of investment per annum. They are large numbers and I hope the plan is successful.

We are in the grey period between the Budget debate and the Finance Bill. I hope that we will have the First Reading of the Finance Bill as soon as possible to enable not only the House but those interested outside to make their comments in good time for the Second Reading and Committee. I ask the Minister to consider seriously, if we are to encourage the monthly deduction from the payroll of payments into personal equity plans, tax relief on interest earned on amounts deposited until they are invested. Otherwise it could be a disincentive. A sum of £200, £100 or £50 a month will take some time to build up before a sensible share purchase can be made. Perhaps we have many constituents who applied for the 800 allotment of British Telecom shares. That is £2,000. It therefore will take time for the individual to build up his cash reserves in a personal equity plan before he can make a sensible direct equity investment. Otherwise the expense of buying shares in smaller tranches could be prohibitive.

When the Minister is drafting the Finance Bill, will he please ensure that no relief is given if the individual makes his investment through a unit trust or institution? The relief should be for individuals who invest directly in equity shares. That is what we want to encourage, and not investment through institutions.

The business expansion scheme relates to the flow of savings and investment. I have taken some time to study the voluminous report from Peat Marwick. It is an excellent report and it gives justification for the Chancellor to proceed to extend the business expansion scheme indefinitely. The report shows that there has been incremental equity investment and it justifies the scheme and its relatively generous tax concessions.

I feel strongly that we have not made enough progress with the encouragement of what I call local syndicates on a county, town or metropolitan basis. The syndicates would encourage local investors to claim tax relief and invest in local business. Local investors often know which local businesses are likely to thrive. I would like to see some guidance either from the Department of Trade and Industry or the Treasury to local enterprise agencies. About 200 have already been set up in the country, including one in my own constituency. There should be some guidance to those agencies on the practical steps that should be taken to set up local syndicates.

The Chancellor encouraged industry to invest more in research and development. I was pleased to see that in the Finance Act 1985 there were concessions to encourage business expansion schemes to invest in research and development projects. I think we should go further. There is no magic in the £40,000 worth of relief but perhaps the business expansion schemes could invest that sum in research and development projects. The money should be directed into high technology and high-risk projects. The Government might consider lifting the ceiling of £40,000 to encourage more money to flow into research and development.

I welcome the Budget. I think that it is imaginative, and I think it will promote what the Chancellor called the enterprise culture. It is good for jobs but it is especially good for wider share ownership.

8.46 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): I cannot echo the praise of the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) for the Budget. He obviously does not represent a constituency like mine in south Wales. If he did, he would not be talking about his constituents looking for shares in British Telecom. Most of my constituents are looking for sufficient money to exist on. The reason for that is the massive unemployment which has been created in the past seven years of Tory government.

I am sympathetic to my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon). I enjoyed his speech very much. I should not like him to assume that perhaps by having a Secretary of State for the northern region, as we have a Secretary of State for Wales, his region would benefit. In fact, he would find, as we have done with the Welsh Development Agency and the Secretary of State for Wales, that the region was worse off.

In 1979, the unemployment percentage for the whole of the Port Talbot travel-to-work area was 3·7 per cent. It is now 20 per cent. In one area of my constituency, Maesteg, male unemployment is 40 per cent. How has this come about since 1979? We have had demanning at Margam steelworks near Maesteg and there has been the closure of a number of collieries. In 1980 the Caerau colliery was closed, and in 1981 the Coegnant colliery was closed. Since the miners strike, St. John's colliery in Llynfi valley has closed. That is only one of the four valleys that comprise my constituency. Since the end of the miners strike, in Garw valley the Garw-Fylaldu colliery has closed. In the Ogmore valley we have had the closure of the Wyndham Western colliery. In recent weeks the last link of the Ogmore constituency with the mining industry has been severed with the closure of the Coed-Ely colliery. Since the end of the miners strike, we have lost 1,500 jobs, together with all the supportive industry jobs which were lost in conjunction with those closures.

All this has combined with the closure of factories on the Bridgend estate, together with bankruptcies and other matters which have caused businesses to close. To this is added the cut in revenue for local authorities and the compelled reductions in services such as social services. In the Ogmore area there are still 2,500 people waiting for housing. We are looking for sheltered accommodation for the elderly. All those services have been drastically reduced because of the Government's financial policies.

Hospital services in the whole of Mid Glamorgan have been severely cut. I understand that there is an abundance of doctors, qualified nurses and experienced personnel in a variety of supportive roles who are all out of work. They are all seeking employment but no jobs are available for them; yet the Mid Glamorgan health authority has announced that it is 1,000 nurses short in the area. The social work and essential services necessary for the old, disabled and disadvantaged have all been abandoned to the whim of the grocer's daughter.

Where is there in the Budget any compassion or sign of caring for people? What action is included to reduce the unacceptable figure of 3·5 million unemployed to a level that we would assume was reasonable — back to the

[Mr. Ray Powell]

1979 figure in the Ogmore constituency and the travel-to-work area of the Ogwr borough and Port Talbot? What a blessing it would be for the 8,000 people in my area who are out of work if we could return to the 1979 figure.

Nevertheless, I welcome the extension of aid, limited though it is, to the MSC's community programme schemes. Even the increase in the average wage from £65 to £67—a meagre £2 increase—is acceptable. It will help some of the administrators to extend slightly the scope of the schemes. A much more realistic figure would have been £80.

Of course, I welcome the measure as chairman of one of these successful schemes called community and training in Ogwr. It provides for about 450 places this year and the number is steadily increasing. I have some knowledge of the people applying for jobs especially in the construction industry, because I have interviewed bricklayers, floorlayers, plasterers, painters, plumbers, electricians, architects, buyers, and planners — every conceivable professional or technical person required to build what we need in the construction industry. I have interviewed them. There are thousands of such people in my area alone seeking employment.

We need to meet the demand. My right hon. Friend the shadow Chancellor and deputy Leader of the Opposition —the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) — spelt out in detail only yesterday what Labour will do when we form the next Government. It is a matter of priorities. Everyone knows what they should be, but getting the country back to work is more important than anything else. We should be exploiting every sinew of Government responsibility to solve this appalling social curse. We should be rejecting the massive unemployment in the United Kingdom. Hon. Members on both sides of the House should recognise and appreciate the social upheavals it is causing. Young men in the prime of life are thrown out of work, without hope and without a future for themselves, their children, their grandchildren or even future generations.

Since the miners' strike, the coalfield communities campaign has been set up nationally. A Welsh section has been formed to bring organisations together to help the coalfield communities. My constituency desperately needs the assistance of the coalfield communities campaign and of the Government. The coalfield communities campaign has said that in Wales it is vitally concerned with those communities in the Principality which have lost the pits which provided basic resources and the basic source of employment. The campaign stated:

"Throughout this period of economic change . . . one fact remains constant, while the miners themselves may have received some financial consolation for their redundancy, the stranded Community gets no help at all.

The Coalfield Communities in Wales have severe economic problems that are long standing and require investment over a number of years . . . it is in co-operation . . . between the Private and Public sectors that a policy and a programme should be provided for the economic, social and physical retention and regeneration of our Coalfield Communities."

The campaign stated that the Government should

"provide action on a massive scale involving major spending in the fields of communication, house building and environmental improvements."

It referred to

"long-standing difficulties of securing sufficient jobs for displaced coal-miners and their dependants within the constrained Valley areas and the traditionally high levels of unemployment which . . . we have suffered and which are factors peculiar to the coalfield areas by comparison with the urban areas of England and Scotland."

The campaign continued:

"the securing of alternative employment opportunities was beset with difficulties. The most serious result being, in my view, the loss of post-school training opportunities for youngsters. Traditional apprenticeships have disappeared and youngsters are not being recruited into employment in any great numbers."

There are already 21 authorities in Wales participating in the Welsh campaign — 16 district councils and five county councils—which together represent more than 2 million people.

The Welsh coalfield communities campaign made its main point to the Welsh group of the parliamentary Labour party. One councillor stated:

"Our coalfield communities face very serious problems which are particularly severe if you compare us with the rest of Britain.

I am most familiar with my own County and what I have to say is specifically about Mid Glamorgan . . . it is one of the most deprived counties in Britain, but you will see much the same difficulties in all Welsh coalfield communities.

Our unemployment problems are severe. Almost one person in every five of our workforce claimed unemployment benefit in January. We believe the true rate of unemployment is probably more like one in four—rising well above that in some parts of the County. We are among the 6 worst counties in Britain.

Our communities are plagued with ill-health. Death rates are the second highest in Britain and more people are permanently sick than anywhere else in the country. As a result more prescriptions are issued to each person than in any other Welsh county.

Our housing is amongst the worst in Britain, with more houses without inside toilets than anywhere else . . . .

The environment our people live and work in is still badly scarred by over two centuries of mining and other industrial activities. Public infrastructure like schools and roads is old and desperately needs replacing or improving.

All those problems are most severe in the mining communities in the valleys and are closely associated with the way the industry has developed and exploited the area.

Putting matters right is enormously expensive and a programme of capital spending in Mid Glamorgan has recently been submitted to the European Regional Development Fund. It is limited to eligible projects on which we might hope to get a capital allocation from Central Government. Even so, it amounts to £77 million over four years.

Mid Glamorgan's ability to commit resources to help overcome its difficulties is severely limited by the present Government's expenditure controls and by its own extremely weak rate base. We have the lowest rateable values in Britain.

Government policies seem to us to favour the prosperous South and South East of England and, when they occasionally focus on poorer areas, it always seems to be the big cities that benefit. Well, we have a big city population in our valleys and our needs are every bit as great. Our potential to contribute to the nation's prosperity, given the right help, is probably greater."

I could go on at some length on the problems which beset Mid Glamorgan and my constituency of Ogmore. I ask the Government to consider nine points which I should like to put to them. They are:

"Recognition by Government of the special needs of the Coalfield Communities of Britain.

Designation of Coalfield Community Action Zones as a means of focussing new policies and giving higher rates of Regional Grant and other support.

An additional investment programme to improve the environment and modernise the public infrastructure in Coalfield Community Action Zones.

A specific additional grant to Welsh Development Agency earmarked for land reclamation and major environmental schemes in the Welsh Coalfield Community Action Zones.

An allocation of additional resources through RSG and capital allocations to the local authorities of the Coalfield Community Action Zones in Wales . . .

A recognition by NCB and the Government that the scale of the problem is not reflected in the scale and scope of the funding and activities of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. We would particularly

like to see NCB (Enterprise) given more support in the form of grants, providing venture capital for new start ups and widening its support towards training beyond ex-miners.

A three year moratorium on colliery closures in Wales and a commitment to invest in a new colliery at Margam.

A far more effective marketing of Welsh coal by NCB, reflecting its special qualities, and an extension of the Government's coal firing scheme to the public sector.

A complete revision of the EEC's coal policies on the lines of the recommendations by the Labour Group of members of the European Parliament."

The Budget has not even considered further prospects of employment within the area to which I have referred. My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) mentioned the slogan of the Budget of my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) some years ago, "Steady as she goes". My hon. Friend said on Tuesday that this Budget could be given the slogan "Steady as she sinks".

9.3 pm

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): There are many excellent features in the Budget and I should like to give a personal welcome to the reconsideration of the tax position of occupational pension funds. I hope that I am right in expecting that this will at last prove a decisive move in the direction of full transferability of all accrued pension rights.

I want briefly to express some concern about the general Budget strategy. I am worried about its impact on the serious development in this country — the reappearance of the division of the nation into haves and have-nots. I think that there are two aspects of that problem which we can discern in the Budget. First, there is what I would call the cult of the equity, which we see in the otherwise excellent plan for the PEP. I wonder why it is necessary to confine that project to investment in equities only. I think that the decision should be reconsidered, because it seems to be against a discernible trend in the direction of management buy-outs, worker participation, employee shareholdings and the generally increased perception of the advantages of allowing workers to receive a larger share of their remuneration through the performance of the business rather than their wages. Other classes of share such as convertible debentures, value added loan stocks, dynamised debentures, participating preferences and perhaps other experimental forms of investor participation ought to be encouraged as well. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will consider this point.

I should like to see what on the continent is known as the historic compromise: a closer relationship between workers and investors and a greater recognition of their absolute identity of interest. I have said in the House before—I think that I shocked people when I said it, but I shall repeat it now—that we are moving towards a time when workers will give up their right to strike and investors will give up their claim to an equity dividend. This may lie some way ahead, but we should prepare for moves towards greater harmony and better relations between investors and workers. The "two sides in industry" concept ought not to be allowed to continue. Marx may have had a point when he said

"The profit belongs to the workers"

but of course a fair return belongs to the investors, too. Otherwise there will be no profits and, sooner or later, no workers either.

However that may be, I think that the historic compromise in the creation of wealth and the end of the game of "Normans and Saxons" should be a particular mission of the Conservative party. I hope, therefore, that the PEP scheme, which I believe is destined to have a very great success, should be extended to other classes of share besides equities.

I should like to say a few words about the increasing division between those in work and those in need in our society. We now have 8 million people on supplementary benefit. That is a very large number and, unfortunately, it seems to me that as a result of the reforms of the rating system which the Government have in mind — and which I fully support—and also as a result of the impact of the Social Security Bill which is now in Standing Committee, it is likely to rise. If it is implemented as it stands, with the emphasis so strongly on needs-related benefit and, unfortunately, inadequate provision for contribution-related benefits and neglect of the scope for benefits founded on citizenship as of right, I am afraid that the division between those in work and those in need in Britain will become even more marked. Every civilised community has to strike a balance between unity and freedom: the unity of the community and the freedom of the individual. That is what politics is all about.

In a modern society where our mutual relationships are so widely expressed in terms of cash, the Budget is an important indicator, a determinant of the balance between the scope which our economy provides for the pursuit of selfish aims—making our own choices—and the power of the various systems and social institutions by which we bear one another's burdens. I am not convinced that the Chancellor of the Exchequer is wise to commit himself to a reduction in the rate of income tax to 25p in the pound and to move in that direction this year by a reduction of 1p in the pound in the taxation of income. I should have preferred that the resources he has chosen to deny to the Departments should have been dispersed in a less random fashion and in a way that would have promoted the unity of the nation rather than its division.

Lastly, I would like to refer to the Chancellor's Green Paper on the reform of personal taxation. It adds to my sense of uneasiness. In 1974 the Conservative party committed itself to the tax credit scheme, though not entirely in the form that I personally would have chosen, and the commitment was repeated in 1979 in the first general election manifesto that emanated from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. But the Green Paper is plainly intended to kill the idea of tax credits stone dead. I am currently serving on the Standing Committee on the Social Security Bill, and as we progress through its clauses I become more and more deeply convinced that the stone that the builder is seeking to reject in 1986 — the concept of a tax credit scheme, or what I call the BIG idea, the basic income guarantee — will, before very long, become the head of the corner in our system for the redistribution of income.

9.4 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): First, I must apologise for not having been in the Chamber for very long. I have been in Standing Committee all day on the Social Security Bill. However, I want to make a small contribution to the debate. I heard the Paymaster General's speech this afternoon. He is a Member of Parliament for an east midlands constituency, which is just down the road from

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mine. His contribution in Government has been to cut and cut again. He supported similar policies as Minister for Health when we were trying to formulate a policy for a district general hospital. The project got off the ground, but then he imposed cuts and delayed the programme for two years, and jobs went in the process.

Now we have another Budget. The Chancellor suggested that the 7·5p increase in the price of petrol should be absorbed by the petrol companies. They have already given him their answer—they are not prepared to do it. The result is that the increase is to be added to the price. As everybody realises, an increase in the price of petrol means an increase in the prices of commodities which have to be transported, and that will no doubt be reflected in the prices of commodities in the shops. At the weekend I go shopping with my wife fairly regularly, and I notice that prices continue increasing, and never decrease. Nor will they decrease in spite of the reduction in the price of oil, because that cut is not being passed on to the consumer as it should be. The big oil companies are raking off massive profits, yet the Chancellor is prepared to let that continue and not to do a great deal about it.

The Chancellor has missed a real opportunity to reduce unemployment. Every constituency suffers from unemployment, some more than others. There has been a dramatic increase in unemployment in my constituency since 1979, and it continues to rise. I remember in 1979 when the Chancellor of the day gave a massive reduction in income tax to the rich. The Prime Minister, when questioned at the first Prime Minister's questions after that reduction, said that all the money that was being given back would be invested in industry so that industry would expand and jobs would be created, but it has gone the other way. When the restrictions were removed, money flowed out of the country to places where the pickings were richer than in the United Kingdom. The result was massive unemployment, and the level of unemployment continues to rise and cause misery in our constituencies.

Many changes are taking place as a result of the Government's policies. In Committee on the Social Security Bill, the Government have said that they want child benefit paid into the man's pay pocket. That is scandalous. That money belongs to the person who looks after the child, and in the main that is the mother. When the Labour party was in power, it made sure that the mother received the child benefit. Now, however, the system is being reversed. It will be put into the man's pay packet, and many women will be denied that money in future. We all know what happens, and that is why the Labour party when in office changed the rules.

I recall the comment of the hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton)—I am glad that he has come back into the Chamber—about ensuring that business has proper training programmes. I think that the hon. Member has a nerve. His party has been in office for almost seven years, and has not done a great deal about training except that the Government got frit, they realised that people were not very pleased with what they were doing and they rushed into a youth opportunity programme that was cheap labour, using youngsters on adult jobs. The £25 paid by the Government was the only money that those youngsters got for the work they did. The Government brought in other schemes but they only provide cheap labour. We want a proper training programme. The Government are late in bringing forward proposals. The people have got the message on unemployment. The training that would enable people to be ready for jobs when the economy improved has not been provided for.

The Government have done a wicked job on education. They talk about skill training and places in universities. Now, by cutting student grants, they are making parents pay. The people who can least afford it have to pay for their children to go to university. Is it any wonder that we get massive lobbies of parents and students to tell us what they feel about Government policy on education?

I have no good words for the Budget. It will not help many of my constituents in Ashfield in Nottinghamshire. When I go home this weekend, my constituents will give me the message at my surgery that they do not accept the Budget either.

9.16 pm

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): It is the mark of a creative Chancellor that against a background of having lost enormous income which he might have expected from tax revenues, and finding himself with very little room for manoeuvre, he has nonetheless managed to spread good cheer throughout the country, other than on the Opposition Benches, and he has managed to lead the country in constructive directions.

This is a Budget for enterprise and responsibility. We should note first, however, that his macro-economic strategy has been overwhelmingly endorsed by the markets. Before we have voted on the Budget the markets have given an enormous vote of approval to the Chancellor's measures and strategy. That is because he has been prudent in his overall fiscal policy. Against the background of the erratic behaviour of sterling M3, the situation has been particularly difficult. Therefore, the Chancellor has been right to take the cautious path on the public sector borrowing requirement. He has been vindicated by the response of the market, by the fall in interest rates, and by the resilience and positive strength of the pound.

The Labour party proposes to spend £24 billion additionally. Heaven knows what would happen to interest rates and to sterling if that seemed a credible and realistic prospect. I listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth). The alliance, too, proposes to spend more. I was puzzled by some public statement by alliance spokesmen recently, when they said that, unfortunately, because of falling oil prices, they could no longer create so many new jobs through their proposed budget. They seemed to suppose that it is politicians and not businesses who create jobs.

The fall in oil prices has been a massive benefit to the economy overall. There has been a tremendous drop in the input costs of business. Along with that we have seen a fall in the pound and, because of the background of good financial management, interest rates have come down. So we must congratulate the Government on having ensured that the economy is in such good shape that it is able to take the greatest advantage of the new circumstances, which could have been very difficult to cope with.

Not only has the falling oil price reduced industrial costs, but the Government have been able to reduce the overall tax burden.

It is a Budget for enterprise. The introduction of the personal equity plan is an exciting prospect. Because mortgage interest rates are coming down people will have

more money to put into the new investment opportunity. We must be wary and ensure that the plans do not involve excessive administrative costs. We must also be careful about encouraging investors to put more than they can afford into individual stocks. I certainly wish the scheme well although, with time, it may need development and refinement. It is very much a move in the right direction, as is the Government's intention to explore the possibility of profit sharing, which would do so much to end the adversarial style of industrial relations, which has been so dismally characteristic in our national life, and which seems to be the sole, backward looking, stale vision of the Opposition.

This is a Budget for responsibility, and I welcome the initiatives taken to promote charitable giving. That will be of benefit in not only releasing a whole range of resources and energies complementary to the statutory and bureaucratic welfare system, but could be immensely beneficial to training in encouraging firms to give direct charity funding.

With the vote of confidence that the markets have given, with lower taxes, with the incentive to enterprise and responsibility that the Chancellor's Budget has allowed us, Britain faces an encouraging future and significantly improved prospects for employment.

9.21 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): The hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) said that this is a creative Budget that has been welcomed by the City. We need not a creative Chancellor for the City, but an effective Chancellor for the unemployed.

This is a Budget designed not for the regeneration of Britain, but for the regeneration of the Conservative party. On neither count will it succeed. Whereas the latter is a problem for Conservative Members, the former is a problem for the whole country. From tax cuts which benefit the wealthiest to an assortment of schemes whose principal feature is their utter insignificance to this country's problems, this is a Budget that does not address our difficulties, but ignores them. It will chiefly be remembered as the Budget which expresses the Government's final word on the unemployed—"You are on your own". This Government no longer see their responsibility in an economic sense, for the unemployed, but see unemployment as simply a social or human problem. I am not sure whether the Paymaster General was disclaiming or avowing the Tory Reform Group proposals earlier. When we look at what it says, we can see that there is a considerable consensus of opinion, not merely on this side of the House, but crossing the House, that it is a central role of Government — and not just the free market—to address the problems of unemployment. The real argument between this Government and so much of the country is that we see the role of Government as central to curing unemployment, whereas the Government see their role as incidental. The unemployed will get a lot of caring, but very little capital.

Last year's Budget was said to be a Budget for jobs, and unemployment rose. This year, not even the pretence has remained. It may be true that one cannot measure priorities simply by the amount of money spent, but it is some guide to priorities. When we consider that the net cost of the Government's employment measures is one-tenth of the give away in tax handouts, that shows us the measure of priority that this Government has towards the unemployed. We should strip away the rhetoric and get down to reality when we examine all the Government schemes.

We heard many comments from Conservative Members about the personal equity plan. The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) welcomed the plan without qualification; a position which is inconsistent with the position taken by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), who said that the plan amounts more or less to a con trick. Perhaps that is not unusual with the alliance. Let us examine the reality of this personal equity plan against the claims that are made for it in the Budget.

It is claimed that the personal equity plan will extend share ownership, and it will give first-time shareholders, the ordinary man in the street, the right to invest in shares so that they will benefit from the scheme. Further, it is said that it is to be seen in the same light as council house sales, so that the person who bought his council house will now invest money in shares.

Let us examine for a moment who will benefit under this personal equity plan. First of all, let us blow away some of the puff that has surrounded the plan. The hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) and others might be forgiven, if they simply read the popular press, for thinking that the personal equity plan gives some sort of tax break when entering the plan, so that the money put into the plan would be taken out of pre-tax income. However, it is only to money out of taxed income that the plan applies, and if one wants to get the full benefit of the plan, one will have to have £200 a month out of one's taxed income lying spare. I do not know how many Conservative Members have constituents in that position, but Labour Members have few.

Secondly, tax incentives are given first on capital gains tax, and secondly on dividends. The capital gains incentive should be seen in the context that the maximum that can be put in to the personal equity plan is £2,400 a year. It will take years for any one putting in even £2,400 a year in a personal equity plan to yield capital gains on the sale of those shares, which will require relief up to the capital gains maximum of £6,300 a year. It will take several years, even if a person is putting in the full £2,400 a year, before he gets to the stage at which there is a benefit on capital gains tax.

The tax relief given on dividends is a relief only on dividend income that is put back in to buy further shares. Let us take a basic rate taxpayer, remembering that this plan has been sold as the ordinary man in the street's ability to buy shares. Supposing he puts in £2,400 in the first year. If we take the Government's figures, his dividend will be £120 to £150 a year. He will be paying about £40 a year in income tax on that. He can then reinvest that £40. The sole benefit that he gets out of his £2,400 is the right to buy an extra £40 worth of shares and put them back into the plan. Out of that, he has to pay the scheme manager's charges.

I suggest that for the average basic rate taxpayer or man in the street, the gains from this scheme, except over a very long time, will be virtually negligible, but they are not the people who will use this scheme, because the important thing to remember about it is that it is available to existing shareholders. They will put money into the scheme and every broker handling any substantial portfolio will be shoving money into the scheme because it is a tax-free shelter. For example, when the amount of their other investments means that they may be liable for

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capital gains tax, this is a way to ensure that they minimise that tax liability. The money can be put into the tax-free shelter and kept there, giving capital gains benefits while retaining the full amount of the £6,300 limit each year on capital gains tax on other investments.

The top rate taxpayer who puts money into the scheme when he gets his rebate on the dividends that he uses to reinvest in shares will be getting double what the basic rate taxpayer is getting. If that is taken in conjunction with the changes in capital transfer tax, which means that lifetime gifts are no longer taxable, that person could give money to his wife, children and family and put it into the tax free scheme. Considerable sums of money will be put into the tax free shelters, not by first time buyers or the man in the street, but by holders of already substantial holdings and those on the top rate incomes.

I do not mind schemes for wider share ownership being put forward by the Government. What I do mind is their being presented as schemes for the ordinary man in the street when they are nothing of the sort. It is not people's capitalism; it is top people's capitalism.

Mr. Freeman: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he would scrap the scheme or extend it?

Mr. Blair: I will be even more generous with the hon. Gentleman. Why, if this is a scheme for first-time buyers, is it not restricted to first-time buyers of shares? The answer is that those who will benefit are those with substantial holdings.

That kind of sleight of hand—and it is sleight of hand—governed the Chancellor's remarks, particularly about the effect of the decline in oil revenues upon our economy. He said that if we could survive the loss of half our oil revenues in 25 weeks, this should make us feel perfectly complacent about the loss of the other half over 25 years. There were great trumpetings of "Hear, hear" from the Government Benches when he made that remark. Indeed, the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), in an otherwise good and interesting speech, seemed to suggest that the Chancellor was absolutely justified in making that statement.

In fact, as the Chancellor well knows—and I hope that the Economic Secretary will answer this point in winding up—when he says that we have easily survived the loss of half our oil revenues and why should we not continue to show concern and then pours scorn on the report from another place he is deliberately eliding two things. The first is a drop in world oil prices, which may deplete our revenues but also gives a major supply-side boost to the economy and has all sorts of good counter-inflationary effects of boosting growth, and so on—in other words, as he said, has pluses and minuses. That is one thing. It is quite another thing to have a drop in British oil production, which is a minus for Britain because it is losing it the export earnings from oil, but has no plus because it has an immediate adverse consequence on our balance of payments. That is why the remarks made in the report from another place hold good. The Chancellor, as he well knows, was making a wholly false point.

The testing time for our balance of payments is not very far away. If hon. Members really think that the Government are looking at the long term rather than the short term, they should look at where the figures on our balance of payments are leading us. The figures show that even in the first half of 1987 the current account surplus will be down from an annual rate of some £3·5 billion to an annual rate closer to £1·5 billion.

If we look at page 27 of the Red Book, for example, we see that in fact the significant forecast is that growth in imports of manufactures in 1986 will be over 7 per cent., twice as fast as domestic demand growth. That is the problem that we are going to be facing, and facing soon.

The same type of nonsense—and it really is nonsense—is demonstrated when we discuss the general pattern of the British economy. We have had it again today—how rosy the British economy is and the Paymaster General saying that there is really nothing that we should worry about. But if we look at the Government's record we see a rather different picture.

I shall not go over the figures again—I have done that several times in debates such as this—but the truth of the matter is that whenever the Government talk about how the economy is doing they talk as if they came to power in 1981. They forget that they were in power from 1979 to 1981, when the industrial base of our economy suffered extraordinary damage very largely as a result of Government policy. We must start from the base of 1979 to show the sort of growth trends over the past four or five years. This is shown by the fact that manufacturing output is barely at 1979 levels and manufacturing investment is still way down.

It is that refusal even to acknowledge that there is a problem that is so wilful about the way in which the Government set out on their economic policy. It would be easier if we could acknowledge what the problem was and simply debate the remedies. The difficulty with the Government is that one must spend considerable time persuading them that there is a problem in the British economy.

If our oil revenues had increased, that would have added a further dimension to the parody of reality which is the Government's economic thinking. If we had had those oil revenues, the Government would have used them for tax cuts. The Budget that we did not have is every bit as bad as the Budget that we had. The Government's priority would have been for tax cuts. With 4 million unemployed, growing poverty, crumbling housing and infrastructure, and the desperate position in our inner cities, how can any reasonable person think that the priority is to cut taxes? Yet that is the priority at the heart of Government policy.

We know how next year's tax cuts will be paid. We know that the Government will give us tax cuts, and why. They will give us tax cuts in advance of the general election. That will be the bonanza—the pre-election spree. How will they finance them without oil revenues? They will probably flog off British Gas at an undervalue. So the £4·75 billion from that will pay for £4·75 billion worth of tax cuts. It is impossible to think of a more irresponsible way of running the nation's economy.

It is interesting that everything is geared up to the short term. The only principle that governs Government policy is the principle of expediency. It has been elevated to become the Government's sole principle. When one considers manufacturing industry and selling assets, it is illuminating to consider the Government's remedies when those problems finally catch up with us. One of the most important points in the report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade was the Treasury's view

about what should happen when North sea oil production declines. The Treasury believes that there should be an adjustment in the exchange rate. In other words, the exchange rate should be allowed to fall. That is the very thing that the Government have been refusing to allow to happen throughout last year, keeping interest rates high because of the inflationary impact. Yet that is what the Government advocate when the decline in North sea oil production catches up with them. In exactly the same way, when asset sales decline, the Government advocate an increase in borrowing. Yet at present they tell us that that would be irresponsible. We in the Labour party do not believe, addressing the long term, that those decisions can be postponed any longer.

The Government must play a role in the reinvigoration of the British economy. The Chancellor admits that in the international sphere it is right for Governments to intervene and to be active in regulating the international monetary system. In exactly the same way, I ask the Government to abandon this free market nonsense in our domestic economy. It is as if they believe that the problems of the 1980s can be solved by the remedies of the 1780s. To realise the importance of their role, we have only to look at what Government could do, for example, in research and development, education and training.

Our research and development will fall in real terms while that of our competitors is constantly rising. Scientific research is either staying level or perhaps slightly declining, while our competitor countries are increasing it by 20 or 30 per cent. Those are the implications of present Government policies.

There is one further implication and it is perhaps the most important of all. As I said before, the Government virtually accept that they will carry 4 million unemployed into the next election. In effect, they now budget for two Britains. I think of the time when someone of my generation will be the average age of the members of the Cabinet. That is a long way off, in the year 2010, but I wonder if it is contemplated that we should carry 4 million unemployed until that time.

A cynical electoral calculation lies at the heart of Government policies. The Government believe that if there are sufficient votes from people who are relatively well paid and in work they can abandon the rest. People who think that are not merely morally wrong but socially dangerous because if 30 to 40 per cent. of our population is cut adrift we will end up threatening democracy. Britain cannot be unified until our priorities change. Unfortunately, there will be no change in priorities until there is a change of Government.

9.42 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): This Budget comes at the end of a period of five years of continuous growth. It also comes at a time when international conditions have been unusually disturbed because of the sharp fall in the oil price and the movement of foreign currencies and so on. I heard what the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) said about the consequences of a drop in oil production. I shall have to read his speech tomorrow, because I could not entirely follow his argument. It seems to me that the Labour party is rather disappointed that the economy was not knocked sideways when such a substantial part of the Government's revenue fell away because of the fall in the oil price.

It is right at this time that we should have a cautious and careful Budget and one which does not put too much strain on the markets by over-borrowing. As we were reminded this afternoon, on Monday the Leader of the Opposition said that the Government had borrowed £60 billion in their first five years compared with borrowing by the last Labour Government of £40 billion in the five-year period when they were in office. The right hon. Gentleman is both wrong and misleading. He is wrong because we have borrowed only £50 billion, even in nominal terms, and he is misleading because at today's prices Labour borrowed twice as much.

As a proportion of the gross domestic product, Labour borrowed twice as much in five years as the Conservatives have borrowed in seven years. If borrowing were now as high a proportion of GDP as it was in 1976, the public sector borrowing requirement for the current year would not be around £7 billion but £33 billion or 9·25 per cent. of GDP. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) spoke about the scope for raising the PSBR and I suppose that is the sort of figure he had in mind. The right hon. Gentleman was an economic Minister at the time. Does he now repudiate the actions of the Government of which he was a member?

There is no doubt about what would have happened if there had been a large increase in the PSBR. We should certainly not now be seeing a fall in interest rates or in inflation. Instead, massive increases would be in prospect. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) said, the Budget has been received as an act of confidence by a reduction in interest rates. The 1 per cent. reduction has been estimated by the CBI to save British industry about £250 million per year, and the reduction in mortgage rates announced over the last two days by several major building societies will provide an additional benefit to millions of families buying their homes. The combined benefits of the Budget and the reduction in mortgage rates to the average family with two children and a typical outstanding mortgage of £15,000 amount to £3·76 a week.

We are already seeing the benefits of a steady reduction in the PSBR in declining interest rates. This year, the PSBR, as a proportion of GDP, will be the lowest for the past 14 years and it is no coincidence that long-term interest rates have now fallen below 10 per cent., and are at their lowest for many years. The end of overfunding as a policy instrument, which was announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in October, will also ensure that a low borrowing requirement is fully reflected in low actual borrowing.

At this time of year it is customary to announce a funding "target" for national savings for the following financial year. Last October, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced that in future the Government's policy would be to borrow sufficient to fund the PSBR in each financial year. That means that there is now an overall net funding target of £7 billion for 1986-87. We have concluded that it is no longer appropriate to have a separate target for national savings within that total. Decisions about the best methods of funding will in future be made in the light of circumstances, including market conditions and the relative attractiveness and cost of different instruments.

National savings will continue to play a significant part in funding the PSBR. We will ensure that the attractiveness of national savings products to investors is

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

maintained. Our aim over the coming year will be to keep national savings rates broadly competitive with other rates available to personal savers. In that context, I do not propose any immediate changes in national savings rates.

The Budget has brought again to the forefront of British politics the question of the basic rate of income tax. It is remarkable how Opposition Members have been put out by the fact that, despite the constraints of the current situation, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has been able, in his Budget, to make a further reduction in the basic rate. We have now brought it down from 33p in the pound, which we inherited from Labour, to 29p in the pound today. It is our aspiration to reach a basic rate of 25p, but in reducing it from 33p to 29p we are already halfway there. Hon. Members such as the hon. Members for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) and for Burnley (Mr. Pike) said that there was nothing in the Budget for any of their constituents. However, 24 million out of 25 million taxpayers in this country have a marginal rate of tax at the basic rate. We have raised the threshold for the starting point for tax by more than 20 per cent. after allowing for inflation, whereas the Labour Government reduced the starting threshold by 5 per cent. for a married man and 20 per cent. for a single man. Conservative Members should not take anything from them about helping those on lower incomes. That is the sort of nonsense that the Opposition peddle.

Mr. Blair: Is it not true that the total tax burden, including national insurance, amounts to about £30 billion more in real terms than when the Labour Government left office?

Mr. Stewart: We have raised the tax threshold and reduced the rate. The hon. Gentleman is really saying that people are better off under the Conservative Government, because those on higher incomes pay more taxes. I am glad to have that confirmation of the consequence of our Budget.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook made great play of the fact that a Labour Government would spend a lot of money on helping various members of society. He said that he would have to spend £3·5 billion in that connection. Where would that money come from? The answer is the higher paid and the rich. He said—and I hope that we can trust him—that he would not raise the basic rate of income tax. He said that when the basic rate of income tax was 30p in the pound. I hope that it still holds now that it is 29p in the pound. I shall give way if the hon. Member for Sedgefield wants to answer that point. He cannot answer it, however, and that is significant. The Labour party is not prepared to give a commitment to not raising the basic rate of income tax.

The Opposition have said that they will raise about half of the £3·5 billion which they want as extra spend for benefits by dealing with the higher rates of tax. I would like to give an example to Opposition Members of what that might mean. Supposing the Opposition were to impose a higher rate of 80 per cent. that would have to be placed on a taxable income of £22,800.

Mr. Prescott: Tell us about jobs.

Mr. Stewart: That is where the process would have to start, if the Opposition were to leave the 40 per cent. and 45 per cent. thresholds unchanged. If the top rate of tax was to be no higher than 70 per cent., people would have to start paying it on a taxable income of £18,600. Is that a proper level of income to attract a rate of tax of 70 per cent? Alternatively, they could increase all the higher rates. If they did that, they would have to increase each level by 17 percentage points. The first high rate would not be 40p in the pound——

Mr. Prescott: Nobody is listening to the hon. Gentleman. Why not tell us about jobs?

Mr. Stewart: Instead, the first higher rate would be 57p in the pound. That is the sort of nonsense which Opposition Members peddle as their recipe for dealing with the Budget problems. They say that there is an enormous amount of money which they can obtain by taxing those on higher incomes.

In the present circumstances, it is right that the Budget should have a balance between the interests of taxpayers. That is why we have been able to make a further move on the basic rate and why that has been so widely appreciated and so popular in the country. That move has not been popular with the Opposition. The Opposition have said that they would not oppose the move as they realise that it would be ridiculous to do so when people want lower and not higher tax.

Mr. Prescott: They want lower employment.

Mr. Stewart: Listening to speeches from Opposition Members, one would think that people wanted ever increasing rates of taxation. That is, of course, what the people have always had when the Labour party has been in power.

Mr. Prescott: The people have had higher taxes under the Tory Government.

Mr. Stewart: High rates of taxation make an inefficient economy. One of the essential ingredients for making an efficient economy which can continue to provide jobs is that the burden of taxation on industry, business and individuals should be as low and not as high as possible. I am sorry that that sentiment is not shared by Opposition Members.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Will the Minister study the comments made by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) on the Jimmy Young programme this morning in which he made it clear that he had no objection to people earning more than £20,000 a year and that he did not intend to increase income tax for those people?

Mr. Stewart: I listened to the comments made by the hon. Member for Stockton, South, and I have a transcript of what the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has said. He said that the Opposition would have to call for a greater contribution from the people at the top of the wages ladder. He would then use the extra £3·5 million to help those people in most need. I have sympathy with the hon. Member for Stockton, South, as the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook changes his tune so often that it would not be at all surprising if he had said today the precise opposite of what he said yesterday. That would be precisely in tune with what he has been saying about public expenditure.

I would now like to discuss a subject which is perhaps a little less contentious than my previous points. It is

important during the debate that we should have some consideration of the tax reliefs for charity which have received a welcome on both sides of the House.

Opposition Members sometimes find it amusing to portray Tory Ministers, and particularly Tory Treasury Ministers and Chancellors, as grim and Scrooge-like figures. That has always been a complete misrepresentation, and after this Budget the Opposition will find it impossible to argue that case.

It is fair to say that my right hon. Friend's proposals for tax reliefs on contributions to charity have met with a more enthusiastic welcome than any other Budget measure in memory. The charities VAT reform group has described the VAT concession as being the most substantial concession that the Chancellor has ever given on the charities VAT bill. The newly formed council for industry and higher education has been pressing for such measures on corporate giving here because such measures do so much to sustain and expand higher education in the United States. In the United States private finance alone is worth twice as much as the whole of the University Grants Committee's grant for higher education in the United Kingdom.

The director of the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts has said that the tax relief may mean as much as £10 million extra for the arts in the next financial year. The director of the Charities Aid Foundation has described my right hon. Friend's package as "breathtakingly radical". He has said that, according to his assessment, the combination of measures should double the £1 billion of private support currently going to charity. It is right that those measures should be strongly supported on both sides of the House.

Giving to charity is deeply ingrained in the British tradition. What my right hon. Friend has done, in a characteristically creative and innovative way, is to furnish the charities with a range of opportunities for self help. It is now up to them to realise them in an effective and organised way. In some areas——

Mr. Prescott *rose*——

Mr. Stewart: —of public affairs state action is appropriate and right but in so many others——

Mr. Prescott: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stewart: —state action is second best to private initiative. I have every confidence that those opportunities will be seized with the energy and imagination which private initiative can generate.

Mr. Prescott: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stewart: The extra funds should now be available. It will be up to the charities to make their pitch. I welcome the contributions of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) from a sedentary position——

Mr. Prescott: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Speaker: Order. One at a time.

Mr. Stewart: As a practice, I do not give way to hon. Members who behave in such an uncouth fashion and I do not propose to do so tonight.

Mr. Prescott: When are you going to talk about jobs?

Mr. Stewart: The Budget encourages the development of industry——

Mr. Prescott: When are you going to talk about jobs?

Mr. Stewart: —a drop in energy prices, a drop in interest rates and a drop in the corporation tax rate. All those have come together. A fall of a dollar in——

Mr. Prescott: You are a disgrace.

Mr. Stewart: —the price of crude oil is estimated to save industry over——

Mr. Prescott: When are you going to talk about jobs?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I say to the Opposition Front Bench that such behaviour is very unseemly.

Mr. Prescott: So are the unemployed. When are you going to talk about jobs?

Mr. Dixon: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was under the impression that when a Member wound up a debate such as we have had today he would deal with the contents of that debate. We have been making points about unemployment in our constituencies which have been ignored by the Chancellor. Yet the person who is answering, that squalid little person there, has never once talked about——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) knows perfectly well that he must not say things like that.

Mr. Dixon *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. Mr. Ian Stewart.

Mr. Stewart: It is not surprising that people in Britain do not regard the Labour party as remotely suited ever to take power——

Mr. Prescott: What about jobs?

Mr. Stewart: The behaviour of the hon. Gentleman has been simply disgraceful today. He held the Dispatch Box for nearly an hour. He tried over a long period to ruin the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford on Avon (Mr. Howarth) and he is now trying to prevent the Government from putting forward their comments on the Budget at the end of the debate.

Mr. Blair *rose*——

Mr. Stewart: I was talking about industry. The hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) wanted to try to prevent me having the time to address many of the issues which have been raised in the debate.

The best way that we can encourage further jobs in Britain is to have a strong and successful industry and commercial sector. Just because the 35 per cent. rate of corporation tax was announced and introduced two years ago, we should not forget that this, 1986-87, is the first year when we will have the lowest corporation tax rate for many years in Britain and one of the lowest among the industrial countries.

That is one reason why we can look forward to a continuing period of growth in the British economy in the coming year, building on the five years of continued growth that we have now had, despite the sharp shock which has been administered to the economy by the oil price.

Mr. Prescott: Tell us about jobs.

Mr. Stewart: That is why we can continue with our measures in the economy not only to help the company sector and investment, but also with the package of employment measures——

Mr. Prescott: Tell us about jobs.

Mr. Stewart: —which my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General described so effectively earlier.

The Paymaster General pointed out that we had done a great deal to help those who are not fortunate enough to be in work——

Mr. Prescott: Tea and sympathy.

Mr. Stewart: That is an important part of this Budget as it has been of recent Budgets. I remind hon. Members that in the last Budget my right hon. Friend restructured the whole of the national insurance contributions in such a way as to give the greatest help to those at the lower end of the payments scale and to encourage people to take new jobs——

Debate adjourned.—[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Keynsham Hospital Maternity Unit

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

10.1 pm

Mr. Jack Aspinwall (Wansdyke): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise on the Adjournment the issues surrounding the proposal by the Bristol and Weston district health authority to close the Keynsham maternity unit.

I would first like to record my thanks to Doctors Tom Garrett, William House and Simon Lowe. I should also like to thank Michael Quinton, secretary of the Bristol community health council and its members, the Wansdyke district council and the 42 general practitioners in the Keynsham maternity unit catchment area who have given positive support. Thousands of people have signed petitions. I thank Mr. Leslie Baker, chief reporter of the local community campaign newspaper, the *Keynsham Weekly Chronicle*. Mrs. Pam Rocyn-Jones and Mrs. Andrea Hider have been hard-working in their campaign. I should also like to place on record my thanks to Malcolm and Christine Kempster, whom I met on Monday at their home. I also met baby Ellen, who was born at the Keynsham maternity hospital. The professional medical and administrative staff at Keynsham hospital have worked hard to keep a local, caring service.

It is the aim of Government to provide not only the most effective and cost-efficient system of health care but the most responsible. The Bristol and Weston district health authority's proposal to close Keynsham maternity unit negates all three aims. The closure was first proposed by the Bristol and Weston district health authority in September, 1985. In accordance with the appropriate Health Service circular, the Avon family practitioners' committee should have been invited to comment on such a proposal. It was not.

In view of this legal error, the Minister for Health rightly saw fit to defer consideration until the correct consultation process had been followed. The rectification of the error is now being pursued with the family practitioners committee, which firmly opposes the closure. The case is likely to return to the South-Western regional health authority in April. Due to this error a great deal of cost and loss of staff morale has occurred.

I feel obliged to inform the House of the misguided intentions of the Bristol and Weston district health authority. In 1985 total admissions to the Keynsham maternity unit numbered 667. This figure included 579 obstetric admissions and 88 convalescent cases. Of the 579 obstetric admissions, 434 were transfers in, for postnatal care and 113 were actual deliveries. The unit is used by the patients of the 40 GPs in the area and it is estimated, from the bookings made by 1 January, that there would be approximately 120 deliveries in 1986. This is consistent with the number of deliveries in the past four years, despite the uncertainty about the unit's future. Yet the Bristol and Weston district health authority says that the unit is underused. This is not the case. It can be argued that the unit is not reaching its full economic potential, but this is only because some GPs and consultants refuse to accept the change in medical and public opinion in favour of low technology births. There is also the uncertainty about the unit's future. The cost of the maternity unit has been based

on it being an outpost of the Bristol maternity hospital and the cost per delivery has been distorted to some extent by that fact.

The cost per patient day at the Bristol maternity hospital is now about £120, whereas the cost per patient day for the whole of Keynsham hospital, including the maternity hospital is £50. If Keynsham were seen as a whole and regarded as a facility for the whole of Keynsham and the surrounding area, the cost for the maternity unit would appear in an entirely different light.

Keynsham maternity unit has a reputation for quality and progressive maternity care. In recent years, there has been new evidence showing that the GP-midwife team is as good as, if not better than, the specialist units. Although the setting and some of the issues are different, the Wendy Savage case is concentrating public and medical opinion on the issue of interventionist maternity care. This is practised by many consultant units, whether or not it is justified clinically or acceptable to most mothers.

A study of the Keynsham and Bristol maternity units undertaken by Doctors Garrett, House and Lowe showed that, for mothers selected as being of low risk and matched for the number of pregnancies they have had for social class, smoking habits, and so on, the perinatal outcome was the same. Intervention by doctors was significantly less in the Keynsham unit. Such intervention — for example, the augmentation of labour and foetal monitoring — is expensive and risky. Professional bodies, such as the British Medical Association, through the general medical services committee, and the Royal College of General Practitioners, now actively encourage GP obstetrics. I refer the House to the resolution approved at the annual general meeting of the Royal College of General Practitioners, which stated:

"That in pursuance of quality, the Royal College of General Practitioners actively encourage those General Practitioners who wish to provide complete maternity services (including intrapartum care) in General Practitioner Units."

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists implies an encouragement of GP obstetrics by insisting on the retention of standards and skills amongst practising GPs. Many papers have been published which suggest that, in cases selected at low risk, management is best given in GP units. A typical example is Marjorie Tew's article in the August 1985 edition of the journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners. Marjorie Tew is research statistician at Nottingham medical school. She has argued that, by the time of the 1970 national perinatal survey, the percentage of births taking place in consultant hospitals had increased by a third to 66 per cent., but the disparity between perinatal mortality rate there and in GP units had doubled since 1958 to become fivefold — for example the perinatal mortality rate in hospital was 27·8 per 1,000 compared to 5·4 per 1,000 in GP units.

It is clear that the trend of both medical and public opinion is back to "low technology" childbirth wherever possible. The Paulton maternity unit in the Bath district health authority is flourishing, with demand rising. The Keynsham maternity unit mothers' support group has made it clear that more women do not want "high technology" births, and, furthermore, do not want to go to the Bristol maternity unit. To close Keynsham would be to reduce the choice for expectant mothers. Moreover, it will reduce obstetric skills for GPs and once these have been removed, it is doubtful whether they will be recovered. Above all, in the light of new research and demands by mothers, it will be closing the door on what must be regarded as the way forward for maternity care. This is not the act of a responsible Health Service.

Financially, the Bristol and Weston district health authority hopes to save £68,400 with a net saving of about 11 staff. It is on this saving on which the Bristol and Weston district health authority and subsequently the South-Western regional health authority rests its case. That saving is unrealistic. The sum of £68,400 would be counterbalanced by additional expenditure at the Bristol maternity unit to which patients would be directed. In addition, supposed savings would be further lost on extra services to cover the hole left by the closure of Keynsham — for example, community midwives have to visit newly discharged mothers for the first 10 days. The Keynsham area consists of numerous outlying villages with a high mileage to travel for the midwife and further consequent expenditure. Moreover, given the initial delay with regard to the faulty consultation procedure, the hopes of the Bristol and Weston district health authority to be able to release £68,400 in the next financial year by closing the Keynsham maternity unit have already disappeared.

Although originally the Bristol and Weston district health authority made no proposals for the re-use of the space vacated by the maternity unit, which it should have done in the original consultation if the procedure had been properly followed, there is now a definite proposal for its re-use. That proposal is to move in the unit for the younger chronically sick — long-term physically handicapped — who are now accommodated in the inadequate Clara Jeffries unit in the hospital. That would be a short term measure until better long-term accommodation is created away from a hospital site in conjunction with specialist housing. Certainly, the Clara Jeffries unit is inadequate and new accommodation is needed, but the use of the maternity unit is not the answer. Another solution for the short term problem is the use of the Bristol General hospital, suggested by its managers, as a better short term solution.

Finally, to close Keynsham would not be practical. One has only to look at the geography of the area. If the Keynsham unit were to close expectant mothers would be forced to go to either Weston-super-Mare or central Bristol. The other nearest hospital the Royal United at Bath, is not in the Bristol and Weston district health authority region. Mr. Bamford, consultant gynaecologist at the Royal United hospital has said:

"the Obstetric services based at the Princess Anne Wing, Bath, have serious problems due to pressure on beds, Midwives and Medical Staff, these difficulties being more severe than in any other Maternity Unit in the Wessex Region. Inevitably, if the GP Maternity Unit at Keynsham is closed, some patients will look to Bath for intra-partum care and this will just not be possible. Quite apart from this consideration, it can be argued that it is positively detrimental to confine low-risk patients in high-technology units. I would, therefore, strongly support the campaign for retention of intra-partum facilities at Keynsham for low-risk patients."

The sheer difficulty of travel to and from other hospitals, not only by expectant mothers but by husbands, friends and relations, would be costly and extremely inconvenient. It is precisely at such a time that a new mother needs the support, care and close contact of a family. With increasing pressure on Bristol, new mothers would surely be discharged too soon without the support structure they would get at Keynsham.

I have already pointed out the Keynsham area contains a number of outlying villages and districts. For those

[Mr. Jack Aspinwall]

communities and the surrounding areas of Longwell Green, Bitton, Hanham Abbotts, Oldland and Brislington, maintenance of the Keynsham maternity unit is even more crucial.

The alternatives to closing Keynsham are plainly unrealistic. Expectant mothers have to go somewhere. Currently, it is the practice of the Bath district to discharge patients from the Royal United to Keynsham after 48 hours. The Bath district has indicated that if the Keynsham maternity unit were to close it would not be prepared to accept patients from Keynsham. Still further, patients from Bath would not have the opportunity to receive the support of post natal care provided by Keynsham. The Bristol maternity unit would have the problem of combining high throughput with a high technology practice required by high risk patients.

Mr. Michael Cocks (Bristol, South): Will the hon. Gentleman press the Minister in his reply to answer the point that his constituents are simply the latest in a long line to suffer from the gross distortion in hospital services which has occurred in the Bristol area through the over concentration on the wholly unsuitable St. Michael's hill site, condemned in the Zachary Cope report in 1945 but rebuilt at the insistence of the university and the private consultants in Clifton? Will he stress to the Minister the importance of answering that point in the interests of everybody in the area?

Mr. Aspinwall: I am grateful for the intervention of the right hon. Gentleman. That is a vital point in my representations to the Secretary of State.

I feel very strongly that the problems of inadequae general practitioner cover for home confinement, the demand for which would inevitably increase if Keynsham were to close, and the proposal to close the Keynsham hospital maternity unit, would condemn my constituents to ineffective, inefficient and irresponsible health care. Local general practitioners, the family practitioners committee, the Bristol community health council, the mothers support group at Keynsham and I are fervently opposed to the Bristol and Weston district health authority's decision. To maintain the Keynsham maternity unit would meet the growing demand by mothers for choice and provide the general practitioner-midwife team with a location for obstetrics practice. It represents what must be the future and it would provide an integrated system of health care for the Bristol maternity unit. Moreover, it could give possibly the best cost-effective and efficient structure of health service.

I urge the Minister to ask the Secretary of State to withhold his consent for the proposals of the Bristol and Weston district health authority and the South-Western regional health authority in order to ensure that the excellent service that is provided by the Keynsham hospital maternity unit and its caring staff and local general practitioners remains.

10.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wansdyke (Mr. Aspinwall) on his good fortune in securing this Adjournment debate. He is well known and recognised as a doughty fighter for all the services in his community. He has strongly and clearly represented to the House the very strong views that he holds about the future of the Keynsham hospital maternity unit. They are shared by the organisations to which he referred. The Government have very much welcomed the opportunity to hear my hon. Friend's views. The regional and district health authorities will take note of them, as will my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services and I.

I shall address not only the Keynsham issue but also the wider context in which health authorities are having to plan the future pattern of their health services. I am particularly grateful and pleased that my hon. Friends the Members for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) and for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) and the right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) are in the Chamber this evening.

As my hon. Friend has said, the proposal by Bristol and Weston health authority is that deliveries and post-natal care at Keynsham should come to an end. My hon. Friend quoted a number of statistics. Perhaps I might in return be permitted to refer to a few myself, because undoubtedly there has been a continuing decline in the number of births at the unit: from 356 in 1976 to 188 in 1979, to 160 in 1980 and 1981 and to 116 in 1982, with a slight rise in 1983 to 123. Of these I understand that only 61 in 1983 were delivered to residents of Keynsham and the neighbouring district of Saltford. Indeed, of the 190 deliveries in 1983 to residents of these communities, 129 took place at other locations, including 60 at the Bristol maternity hospital and 11 at Southmead hospital. On average in 1983, occupancy of the 12 maternity beds was just under 50 per cent. In 1982, it was as low as 35 per cent.

These were trends which the district health authority felt it could not ignore. It was naturally concerned at the declining use of Keynsham, especially by local people. It was rightly concerned that the resources at its disposal should be used to the best possible effect. This is what we expect health authorities to do. The demand for health care and methods of delivering services are not static. There are demographic pressures and improved methods of treatment, including the development of care in the community. This means change and we expect health authorities to balance carefully all these aspects in determining the pattern of care that they wish to provide.

Since 1978-79 this Government have provided an extra 20 per cent. in real terms for hospital and community health services. In the coming year we expect to provide a further £650 million—or 6·7 per cent.—against an inflation forecast which is significantly lower than that, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer was able to underline when he spoke to the House on Tuesday. This represents a very significant increase in resources. This, together with the cash savings of £150 million which health authorities are planning to generate in the coming year, will enable all health authorities to implement a substantial expansion of services, but this will not absolve any health authority from the need to deliver services in the most effective manner.

In the south-western region the position is even brighter than in the country as a whole. A revenue increase in the coming year of 7 per cent. comes on top of above-average increases in every year since 1979. The fact that the Bristol and Weston district is relatively well provided for already means that under the region's RAWP formula—the process of Health Service resource allocation—it has received proportionately less than other authorities in the

south-west. However, it too has received regular increases year by year which have enabled a number of important developments to take place. These include the brand new general hospital at Weston-super-Mare and the expansion of cardiac surgery at the Bristol Royal infirmary.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): I trust that my hon. Friend realises that under RAWP, because Bristol is a teaching area, it is losing out as the cost of equipment had increased faster than the provisions under RAWP. Secondly, it seems to me sad that births in Bristol should be concentrated on areas with high technology which is at the convenience of the consultants rather than lower technology which is in the interests of those giving birth.

Mr. Whitney: I recognise the point about the teaching areas. I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that there are pros and cons in having a teaching hospital in the area. I should not like to be drawn at present on the clinical merits on one form of treatment or another. I think that the Health Service is flexible enough to cater for all.

All that I have been saying in terms of the expansion of the services has to be set in the context of what the south-western region hopes to achieve in the next 10 years. The region has established a very praiseworthy objective of achieving a relative shift in resources from hospital-based provision to community care for priority groups such as the elderly, the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped. These developments should, as a whole, greatly improve health care in the south-west, but they cannot be brought about without some alterations to existing provision nor by avoiding the fact that resources which may be used none too effectively at present will need to be put to better use in the future. As part of this exercise, the region is currently reviewing its entire acute hospital provision to ensure it can meet changing demands in the most cost effective manner.

It was against this general background that the Bristol and Weston health authority made its proposal for the future use of Keynsham. As my hon. Friend has said, a change of use at this hospital would have consequences for services other than just maternity. The health authority intends to improve accommodation for physically disabled patients at Keynsham. Community clinic services, including ante-natal services, would be transferred into the main hospital and the separate clinic building would be used as a base for mental handicap support teams. There will also be an eight-place day hospital for the elderly. Therefore, whatever view one takes about the future of the maternity unit, or the way in which the health authority has presented it, it would be wholly wrong to think of the proposal as an entirely negative step.

We shall have to look very carefully at the arguments put forward by my hon. Friend about the particular type of maternity care that Keynsham provides, and to which my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) referred, and also the social implications of any change, such as transport points and general accessibility to services. I understand that all the deliveries that currently take place at Keynsham could, if necessary, be accommodated at the Bristol maternity unit and that the proposal is not in fact dependent on any agreement by Bath health authority to take on some of the case load. There is also the community midwifery service. But obviously we shall want to examine the alternatives, and I shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend the Member for Wansdyke has said.

My hon. Friend will realise that I cannot comment formally on the arguments for or against retaining the maternity unit. Through the consultation process, the Bristol community health council has opposed the change of use an this means automatically that the final decision will rest with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. At this point I must not pre-empt his decision.

As for the present position, my hon. Friend knows that the south-western regional health authority endorsed the Keynsham plans last September and forwarded them to my Department. My officials examined them carefully and were not satisfied that the consultation process had been followed to the letter. In particular, as my hon. Friend has said, the Avon family practitioner committee, which is now a statutory body, responsible to the Secretary of State, had not been consulted formally, although an attempt had been made to consult general practitioners through the local medical committee. This omission has been rectified and the family practitioner committee has now given its views. The district health authority is likely to consider its position at a meeting next month. If the authority still approves the change of use, the regional health authority intends to look at it again, probably in May, before it could come finally to the Secretary of State.

I should like to thank again my hon. Friend for expressing his views so clearly and forcefully. I assure him that my right hon. Friend will consider carefully the points made by him and by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East before reaching a final decision.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-five minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 21 March 1986

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Sunday Trading

9.35 am

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of 110 parishioners of the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows in Stopgate lane, Liverpool, expressing opposition to the Shops Bill which is at present before Parliament.

I agree fully with my constituents that Sunday has special characteristics as a day of rest, recreation and worship for the benefit of our family and community life.

My petitioners urge this House to maintain legal limitations on Sunday Trading to ensure that the special character of Sunday is protected.

I hope that the House will take due cognisance of their prayer.

To lie upon the Table.

Radioactive Waste Storage

9.36 am

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I present a petition from the people of Grimsby and the surrounding area which sheweth—

That the undersigned are totally and absolutely opposed to any proposal to locate any radioactive waste storage or disposal facility within the County of Humberside and consider that any such facility would relegate the area, designating it as more suitable for dangerous dumping than for development.

Wherefore your Petitioners humbly pray that your honourable House do urge the Secretary of State for the Environment in no circumstances to authorise any such dumping or any survey work to assess suitability for the establishment of any nuclear wast dump within the County.

There are two main signatures, backed by a further 190 signatures, which complete the 1,200 signatures of a petition which, I presented three weeks ago in similar terms, and heralds the tens of thousands of signatures to come.

Humberside will fight this 300-year blight. My constituents cannot see why the Department of the Environment is acting as the political arm of NIREX in trying to force the detritus of a nuclear industry on an area which has no connection with it. My constituents consider that if the Department of the Environment Select Committee to stop rushing into the matter and to begin a basic consideration of whether disposal is necessary, whether this is the best method and whether alternatives can be found, it will betray its responsibility to the environment and by constituents.

National Service (Youth Training)

9.37 am

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I beg to move,

That this House takes note with approval of the Government's plans to expand the United Kingdom's volunteer reserve forces; and emphasises the great value to young people of basic service training, while recognising that such training should not be funded in a way which would diminish the United Kingdom's front line capability.

The idea that young people should give some service to the community in which they live is not the exclusive property of retired colonels living in the leafy suburbs of Tunbridge Wells or Cheltenham. As social anthropologists from the time of Malinowski and Durkheim have noted, this feeling is widespread in primitive and advanced societies. It is felt strongly by the Masai tribesmen of east Africa and the prosperous bourgeousie of Switzerland. It can be felt with equal fervour by young people, who look upon some form of service as an initiation right, and the elders in the community who believe instinctively that young people should have a special role in protecting and caring for the community.

I am delighted to note that that general view is shared by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, who will reply to the debate. My diligent research staff have drawn my attention to a speech that the Minister made in a debate on youth problems on 7 July 1980 when he was the chairman of the National Youth Bureau. He called for a three-year young Britons scheme. He said:

"The scheme which I have in mind would be very much voluntary in its nature. I suggest that the first year should consist of basic military training, with limited annual training thereafter on lines operated so successfully by the Swiss. I know that the Armed Forces would not be too keen, but they have embryo facilities and the cadre of instructors."

He went on to suggest that the second year of service should be spent on community work in mental hospitals or old people's homes and that the third year should be spent on industrial or craft training.

My proposals are a great deal less ambitious than that and also a great deal less expensive, but I hope that my hon. Friend's heart is still in the right place. As a starting point for my much more modest proposals, I took the statement made by the then Secretary of State for Defence on 14 April 1983 about the participation of the armed forces in the Government's youth training scheme. My right hon. Friend proposed to make available some 5,200 places for the young unemployed. He said:

"Young people will volunteer to join one of the services on a 12-month engagement, part of which will be spent in formal training and the remainder in work experience."—[*Official Report*, 14 April 1983; Vol. 40, c. 946.]

I welcomed that scheme, which was not surprising, as I had started the first studies for it some two years before when I was a Minister in the Department. That modest scheme was, I regret to say, greeted with howls of rage by members of the official Opposition. In particular, Joan Lestor denounced it on behalf of the working class and Alex Lyon, in a particularly poetic passage, denounced the scheme as compulsory conscription. Joan Lestor and Alex Lyon, both of whom were soon to be rejected by their constituents, might have been surprised if they had realised how vehemently their dislike of compulsory conscription was shared by almost all the senior officers of the armed forces.

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Almost without exception, senior officers wish to maintain our Army as a highly professional body recruited on a wholly voluntary basis, and the Ministry of Defence is reluctant to spend money on anything that does not directly enhance the capability of the front line troops. Conscript natonal service men would be regarded as an encumbrance rather than an asset. This view of the chiefs of staff, which was held three years ago, is still their view today.

Now that the armed forces youth training scheme has been in operation for nearly three years, the time has come to review its operation and to see how it can be altered and improved, particularly as the Ministry of Defence now has to decide whether to extend the armed forces YTS to two years to keep in step with the rest of the YTS programme.

I note that the Royal Air Force seems happy with the existing arrangements. Over the past three years, it has offered 1,606 places to young people and has had 916 successful applicants. It is clear that the young people concerned are getting a valuable training, and, as I understand it, the RAF feels that the scheme has been of benefit to it. Therefore, I see no reason to alter the RAF scheme as it stands.

In the same three years, the Royal Navy has offered a mere 1,130 places to young people and has taken on 335 trainees. Clearly it gets a lot less out of the scheme than does the RAF, and if the Royal Navy wishes to opt out of the project, I see no reason why it should not.

The biggest need, and the greatest scope, for change is in the Army. It was originally planned that the Army would offer nearly 4,000 YTS places a year, but it has barely filled a quarter of the original target. Therefore, I propose that the Army should scrap its original YTS and replace it with a voluntary national scheme in which some 15,000 young men or women would be offered 100 days of regular training with regular pay.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Before my hon. Friend gets on to the scheme about which we are all eager to hear, will he accept that the problem with the services youth training scheme is that the services have never understood the major benefit of recruiting people below the existing age for serving soldiers, sailors or airmen? I helped to set up the YTS scheme. Does my hon. Friend agree that not only is it cheap for the Ministry of Defence because it is paid for by the Department of Employment, but that if the services are offering an attractive career, having had a young man within their ranks for 12 months, it should be hoped that he could then become a more permanent part of the force? Is it not this failure to see this point that has been at the root of the extraordinarily poor figures in the three services?

Sir Philip Goodhart: I accept a great deal of what my hon. Friend, who did so much to set up the scheme, has said, although I note that the old Army young leaders scheme used to be of great value both to young people and to the Army.

My scheme would have considerable attractions to employers. Many employers wish to employ young people with specific skills, but the commonsense message that I get from employers' organisations nationally and locally is that they are, above all, anxious to employ young people with a sense of initiative, of purpose and of discipline. The fact that a young person voluntarily undertakes to spend an intensive period of training should do a lot to enhance his attractiveness in the eyes of a great many employers.

Secondly, such a scheme of 100 days intensive training would be attractive to many men and women who are not particularly attracted by the present Army YTS. Large numbers of recruits are still coming forward both for the Regular Army and for the Territorial Army, and it is clear that many young people relish the challenge, particularly the short sharp challenge that the initial contact with the armed forces inevitably provides. The scheme would also have decided financial attractions to those taking part in it. The 100 days pay for a private, class four, band one comes to no less than £1,340. If one were to set aside £340 of pay for food and accommodation charges while serving, the young person might expect to be £1,000 better off at the end of 100 days.

Many hon. Members will have received letters from young people who are about to embark on a university career. Despite the fact that our grant system for undergraduates is the most generous in the industrial world, many young people going to university are faced with financial pressures. Some of them might find life at university considerably easier if they could start with nearly £1,000 in their pockets, having done a period of military training.

When choosing people who might join the scheme, priority should be given to those young people who have served in the cadet forces or other voluntary organisations at school and also to those who indicate a readiness to do some future service in the Territorial Army.

Three questions then arise. First, would the scheme be excessively expensive? Secondly, would it be an undue strain on the resources of the Army? Thirdly, would it be of any military value? The answer to the first question is, yes, it would be expensive, but not excessively expensive. The Manpower Services Commission is currently spending about £1,100 million on training schemes involving some 400,000 young people. Within that global figure I note that the estimated gross cost of mode B1 youth training scheme place is £3,800 for one year. When we move to two years of mode B1 training, the cost will of course increase. If the cost of training a recruit in the Army was £38 a day, which is a realisic estimate, a place in my suggested scheme would cost no more than a mode B1 place for one year.

Then there is the question whether the scheme would be an undue strain on the Army. Five years ago, or even three years ago, one could have said with some confidence that the Army could have coped within its existing resources. At that time the amount of money that we were spending on defence was growing quite sharply in real terms, and there was considerable elasticity in the Army's excellent training establishments.

I note that in 1981 the Army took in 25,956 recruits. In 1981-82 the figure fell to 12,405. In 1983-84 it bounced back again to nearly 20,000. That degree of variation showed that there was still a considerable amount of flexibility in the Army's primary training system. Since then, however, there has been a double squeeze. In real terms, the amount of money that we are planning to spend on defence is beginning to fall and a review of the Army's training facilities has eliminated a lot of the spare capacity that used to exist. There is talk once again of overstretch in the Army.

I do not want the Army to have to find from its existing resources the extra men and money that would be needed to cope with this scheme. Those with considerable expertise in training tell me that between 500 and 600 extra permanent staff would be needed to cope with this scheme and that the extra gross cost could be between £50 million and £60 million. That is a lot of money, but it is not such a lot when one considers that the budget of the Manpower Services Commission has gone up by £2 billion in the last seven years. I believe that the Army's manpower ceiling should be adjusted to take account of this extra commitment and that the money should come from our rapidly growing youth training budget rather than from our shrinking defence budget.

On the question whether the scheme would be of any military value, I think that it could benefit the Army, both directly and indirectly. One of the direct benefits would be, as I have just suggested, a small extra increase in the regular strength of the Army. Indirectly, I think that it is of help to the Army to be perceived to be making a contribution to the solution of a real national problem. As the number of men and women in the Army contracts, there is always the slight risk that the Army will lose contact with the community as a whole. As many hon. Members in the House can testify, the Army wins friends by having a large number of young people passing through its ranks.

Then there is the question whether 100 days' training is worth anything militarily. To that my reply would be that, if it is not, the NATO Alliance is in real trouble. As I have said, I hope that a considerable proportion of the young men and women who enter the scheme will go on to join the Territorial Army. This Government have sensibly recognised that the Territorial Army needs to be strengthened. I also note that at the moment less than a quarter of the officers and men serving in the Territorial Army have had any service with the regular forces.

I note that in an emergency both the British and the American armies rely heavily upon reserves to fill gaps in their order of battle. A large part of our military planning is based on the assumption that very large numbers of American reserves would cross the Atlantic to take part in a land battle in western Europe. The largest element in the American reserve is the army national guard, which is almost 500,000 strong. I note that before a national guardsman is counted as being properly trained he has to do 12 weeks, which will probably be extended to 14 weeks, basic regular training with the regular American army. Indeed, the Americans believe that three months' primary training with the regular forces is essential for their reserve forces. I believe that 100 days' primary training would have an important and beneficial effect upon our own reserve forces.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Will my hon. Friend make it clear that the first American reserves to be deployed to Europe at a time of emergency or war would be their air reserves, that the air national guard squadrons come across for regular training, in some cases on an annual basis, and that with no trouble at all they are deployed to Europe across the Atlantic in supersonic aeroplanes? That dimension has to be made clear also.

Sir Philip Goodhart: The pilots involved in the ground crew need considerably more than the 100 days' training that I am proposing.

I note that in the Army debate on 30 January 1986 the Minister for the Armed Forces said:

"The critical importance of the reserves is shown by the fact that, in a period of tension and after full mobilisation, the size of the Army as a whole would increase by some 175,000 through the addition of the reserves, and the size of the Army in Germany would almost treble. From that it can be seen that the Army would be in no position to discharge its wartime commitments without our reserve forces. Moreover, the reserves are strikingly cost-effective. The TA, for example, generates over 30 per cent. of the Army's order of battle for only some 5 per cent. of its budget."

Those of us who have attended Army debates over the last 20 years, such as my hon. Friends the Members for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) and for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck), could, I am sure, almost recite that paragraph by heart. For almost 20 years, virtually without change, it has appeared in the speech of the Minister of whatever party who has had the privilege of opening the Army debate. This year I was glad to see that the Minister for the Armed Forces was able to go on to say:

"The expansion of the Territorial Army is making steady progress towards our target of 86,000. The strength of the TA was only some 59,000 when we came into office in 1979. It is over 76,000 now, having increased by some 4,000 in the past year." — [*Official Report*, 30 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 1121-22.]

Even with that expansion, I note that our reserve forces are significantly smaller than those of some of our NATO allies. The French army reserve is 305,000, the German 750,000, the Italian 550,000, and the Greek 350,000. Even the Belgians, with 160,000, have an army reserve almost as large as ours. In almost every case, the reservists will have had at least 12 months' regular experience. The only exception is the Belgians, whose reservists will have had a minimum of eight months' regular service.

To sum up, the present Army services youth training scheme has been only a qualified success. With nearly three years' experience under our belt, it needs modification. I believe that it should be replaced, at some small additional cost, with a scheme that gives 100 days of regular training to 15,000 young men and women every year. I believe that this scheme would be attractive to employers. I believe that it would offer a challenge and provide a pleasing financial reward to many young people. It could do much to strengthen the reserve forces which have such an important role to play if we are faced with a war or an emergency.

Of course, I do not expect my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement to say this morning that he is wholly won over by my argument—which he himself advanced only a few years ago—and that the money is ready and waiting in the kitty and that my proposed scheme will be introduced on Wednesday week. however, I hope that he will remember his earlier enthusiasm and will recall his own wise and robust speech delivered a mere six years ago. I hope that he will look seriously at the proposal. I hope that he will remember that many members of the public think that a little bit of military training would be good for many of our young people.

Meanwhile, I ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State whether he has anything more to say about another proposal for strengthening the reserve forces which I put

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forward in the Army debate on 30 January and which he may recall as I think he was sitting on the Front Bench at the time. In that debate, I pointed out that there was

"one way in which we could enormously enhance our helicopter capacity at very small extra cost to the defence budget." — [*Official Report*, 30 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 1155]

It has been estimated that there are some 550 civilian helcopters and that about 350 of them are civilian versions of military helicopters. Many civilian helicopters are operated by pilots who were trained in the armed forces. Many of the larger civilian helicopters, such as the converted Sea Kings and the Super Pumas, are now working in the North sea oilfields.

For many years, the Admiralty has had a scheme for taking over a number of British merchant ships in an emergency, and public funds used to be spent to modify those ships so that they could swiftly adapt to their wartime role. In much the same way, I believe that 250 of our civilian helicopters could become part of a territorial army of the air. Some modification of the earmarked helicopters might be needed. Extra wireless sets and identification equipment would have to be set side. Some extra training would have to be given to the pilots and the ground crews, and special arrangements would have to be worked out with the operating companies and their clients.

Of course, it would be unrealistic to think that civilian helicopters could be pitchforked straight into a major battle, but the existence of this territorial army of the air, which would be almost as large as the Army's existing helicopter fleet, would mean that every service helicopter now stationed in this country could be given an overseas role. The creation of this territorial army of the air would be the most cost-effective way of filling some of the gaps in our military helicopter capacity.

Since I made that suggestion on 30 January, there have been letters to *The Times* in support of this proposal from Field-Marshal Lord Carver, the former Chief of the Defence Staff, and Mr. Michael Rankin, the director of the British Maritime League, who pointed out , sadly, that the old Admiralty scheme for equipment for merchant ships had fallen into abeyance. I note that the proposal for mobilising civilian helicopters was raised also during the recent North Atlantic Assembly meeting in Brussels by that distinguished Dutch General, General de Jager, who is chairman of the NATO military committee and who pointed out that the Dutch had a mobilisation scheme for civilian earth-moving equipment. It seems that the Dutch have an up-to-date register of bulldozers and that their drivers would be required to report in the first hours of an emergency, which might perhaps be more effective than sticking one's finger in the dyke.

The proposals which I put forward in the Army debate on 30 January were not entirely new, because I had put them forward some four years ago in the Ministry of Defence. I suspect that the Ministry of Defence is aware of the existence of these civilian helicopters and is aware of their potential value in an emergency. I very much fear, however, that it has not yet even reached the point of talking seriously to the main helicopter contractors about the precise way in which civilian helicopters could be mobilised. Do we have service wireless sets ready to put into the helicopters? Do we have suitable "identification friend or foe" equipment to put on those helicopters? Have we had any talks about mobilisation plans with the civilian helicopter pilots who have served in the regular forces?

I am glad that the Government have plans for a helicopter squadron of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force, but so much more could be done with just a little more planning. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State can give us some positive information about progress in the Ministry's thinking on the territorial army of the air. I hope also that it will not take the Ministry another four years to come up with a sensible scheme for giving a short period of military training to some of the young people who would like to undertake it and who could give valuable service to their country.

10.8 am

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): We are all grateful to the hon. Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) for giving us an opportunity to debate this topic. At root is the role of the Ministry of Defence in the community and its broader role in the affairs of the nation. One of the consequences of the decision to go for wholly professional armed services — which, on balance, has been proved to be correct — has been to make the Ministry of Defence constrict itself and to have a tendency to cocoon itself in a wholly military atmosphere. That was always one of the things people feared when we went for a wholly professional force.

One of the strengths of the previous system, in which people were compelled to serve in one of the four services, which included the Royal Marines, was that a wide range of people were involved in military affairs. That meant that the armed services were not cocooned and that there was a much wider spread of knowledge and involvement in and commitment to the armed services.

Memories fade. The second world war is long gone and many people have never served in the armed services. That being the case, we have to make an effort to ensure that the Ministry of Defence does not see its role in a narrow way. The Ministry of Defence, together with its civilian employees, is a major economic force in the national economy. Apart from the Department of Health and Social Security it is our largest single employer. It was right for the Government in 1983 to see that the military and civilian employment aspects of the Ministry of Defence made a contribution to youth training. A number of people in the Chamber today were deeply sceptical about whether the armed forces youth training scheme would be successful.

Those of us who have served in the Ministry of Defence are well aware of the deep-seated hostility to any involvement by the volunteer held by most of the senior military figures. This scheme had the smack of being reluctantly forced on the chiefs of staff by Ministers, but the chiefs of staff went along with it, confident that it would never work. The figures of uptake are deplorable. The armed forces youth training scheme was launched in August 1983 with the intention of providing 5,000 places a year. Up to the end of last year only 1,500 youngsters had accepted places. That is an indictment of the way the scheme has been run and not of the people who could have been encouraged to go into it.

It is important to focus on the other part of the scheme, the Ministry's civil employment training scheme. That was expected to provide about 2,000 places a year, but only something like 650 received training. One cannot go

to any of the military establishments without realising the depth of the training commitment to the professional service man. That training is of a high calibre. Many of the people in civilian youth training schemes are green with envy when they see the training facilities provided by the Ministry of Defence. It has the capacity and the skilled instructors and standards that would undoubtedly benefit our youth training effort.

The first question we have to ask ourselves is whether the armed services and the civilian employers in the Ministry of Defence will in April participate fully in a two-year youth training scheme. The Minister nods his head so I assume they will. That is good. One of the criticisms of the extension of the youth training scheme is that the Government have not yet given sufficient commitment to funding the extra training capacity that is fundamental for such a scheme. There is no point in taking people into these schemes for two years unless there is an extra input of resources to ensure that the scheme has a much stronger training element than hitherto. The inadequate effort we put into skill training is a scandal. Only yesterday, the head of the Manpower Services Commission made a scathing speech about the shortage of skills in the nation.

Whatever view one holds about politics or about the Budget, it must be of paramount importance to increase the skills of our youth. We must be ready to seize the opportunities of a new technological era. Few Government Departments are better able to set an example by increasing training for today's youth than the Ministry of Defence. It is fundamental that the chiefs of staff are told straight that they have to co-operate in this scheme and give a great deal more commitment to it than they have done hitherto.

I hope that as a result of this debate the Minister will go away strengthened for his part in the bureaucratic struggle.

The hon. Member for Beckenham said that the service which has contributed most and got the most out of the scheme is the Royal Air Force. My affection for the Royal Navy is well known and the Royal Marines is second to it. Anyone who works in the Ministry of Defence knows that the most open-minded of the services is the Royal Air Force. Perhaps that is because it is the youngster of our services and also because many of its senior officers have had a wider training and come from a more varied background. It is much easier to incorporate new ideas into the RAF than it is to incorporate them into the Army, the Royal Navy or the Royal Marines.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that the Royal Navy should opt out of the scheme. I vehemently oppose such a thing. The Royal Navy and the Royal Marines should play a full part in the scheme and above all the Army should have a role. What is to be done? I do not know what a realistic target figure should be, but we should not fix a target figure and then fail to fulfil it. This time let us have fixed target figures that will be fulfilled. The next question we must ask is why has this scheme failed—apart from the reasons of bureaucratic inertia and professional hostility. One of the reasons is that the standards for acceptance to the scheme are far too high and much too restrictive.

I have a suggestion of the utmost importance. In the United States the head-start programme has special help and positive action programmes for black and ethnic minorities. That programme has been given a powerful push because the Department of Defence at the Pentagon made a major contribution to the programme right from the start. It deliberately took on a great number of people who were not even fluent in languages and who had problem backgrounds. It was thought that because of the nature of the armed services the people going into the training schemes would be living in a much more disciplined framework than exists in any of the normal youth training schemes. The scheme was therefore especially suitable for people from disadvantaged backgrounds who would be the hardest to train.

Our scheme is wholly voluntary and that is right, but the standards for acceptance ought not to be pitched so high, and the armed services should take into the scheme volunteers who have the least educational qualifications and some of the most difficult backgrounds. People who have been through the courts and who have been on probation and things like that should be taken on. There is a peculiarly strong sense of responsibility in the armed services, and that will mean that the scheme may cost a bit more. It may also mean that the ratio of trainers to trainees may have to be somewhat high. It is time that the Ministry of Defence was asked to take on some of the obligations that the nation requires of it, and the Ministry is in an advantageous position to try to deal with some of our most disadvantaged kids.

Mr. Wiggin: I agree with much of what the right hon. Gentleman says. At the time the scheme was introduced the armed services made the valid point that the entry standards for young people for YTS should not be different from those for the ordinary service man. The problem of age comes into this. I was interested in the right hon. Gentleman's comments about the Royal Navy. The Royal Navy has traditionally had serving boys, and if the services are prepared to take on 16-year-old boys as Regular soldiers, airmen and sailors, life would be a great deal easier. That point has caused a lot of difficulty about entry. I am sure the right hon. Gentleman would not wish the Ministry of Defence to take on the role of an educationist.

Dr. Owen: I am afraid that I do think so. The cost should not be borne by the armed services' budget but by the Manpower Services Commission's budget. It is not reasonable to ask that the cost should be borne by the armed services' budget which, heaven only knows, will be deeply stretched over the next few years. With a 7 per cent. reduction in real terms we cannot ask the armed services to bear the cost of a social responsibility. But the armed services are particularly well equipped to take on the obligation of the social responsibility and some of the stresses and strains of that, and should do so.

Now that the scheme will last for two years, it is easier to justify people of a lower educational attainment being taken on and being part of a head-start programme. It is much easier to justify taking on some kids with a truancy rate and a record of drug addiction or petty crime. Those are the very people who often are not accepted on the civilian youth training schemes because they are seen as being a disruptive force, as indeed they are. It is perfectly understandable that a factory or small employer would find that difficult. People in the probation service and elsewhere cannot place such kids. The armed services could meet that need and we should ask them to do so.

The programme should last for three years, and during that time the kids would catch up and the head-start scheme would succeed. Educational attainments would be

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improved and many would then apply to stay on in the armed services as professionals. At that juncture they should meet all the educational and other requirements for full-time professional service. The value of such a scheme has already been proven by its success in the United States and we could have such a scheme in Britain.

Mr. Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): There is one problem in what the right hon. Gentleman has been saying. We are, and I hope that he is as well, thinking of a voluntary scheme. In my experience of drug addiction and the sort of people about whom he is talking, the voluntary nature of the scheme would have to be somewhat forcibly put, in order to get those people to enter into any scheme involving discipline and the armed forces.

Dr. Owen: Yes, there is no doubt that a kid who is on drugs will not volunteer to enter such a scheme. However, once they have gone through the withdrawal period and they are off drugs, they are often only too well aware how vulnerable they would be if they went back into their community to an atmosphere of urban decay and decline and a culture of drug-taking. I am advised that people believe that some children who have come off drugs, who have been on probation or have had some problems in the courts would volunteer because they are keen that they should be given a second chance, or even, one could argue, a first chance. Such people get depressed after endless applications for youth training schemes and constant refusal. It is then that they go back into crime or on to drugs. I believe that that is the experience of schoolmasters too. They feel that some of those people are attracted to the challenge of the armed services. They are often physically fit people who like the idea of some of the outdoor activities that would go with such a scheme. The young sailors' scheme has been referred to. Many people who are attracted initially into such schemes would not necessarily have high educational attainment and they often have high rates of truancy.

Somebody must make a start. We cannot let such kids go on with no chance. The needs are not being met by the existing system and it is much easier for the Government to do something. It is not wholly a matter for the Ministry of Defence. The Department of Health and Social Security and the Department of the Environment have a role to play. But private employers will not do much. It is extraordinarily difficult to ask them to take into youth training schemes kids with a bad record who will be bad risks and difficult to handle. It is my strong belief that the Ministry of Defence should be giving such a lead.

I have already made it clear that the money for such a scheme should not be taken from the Ministry of Defence budget. It must be funded by all of us. But let me deal with the cultural atmosphere. France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Holland, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Sweden and Switzerland do not have fully professional armed services. They have a system of volunteers. They do not do that purely and simply because it is cheaper. There is a philosophical point here. They want the armed services to be part of the life of the nation.

I am not arguing that we should go back on the earlier decision. We should keep the professional armed forces for as long as we humanly possibly can. The self-restraint and control that the Army in particular, and the Marines, have demonstrated in Northern Ireland has shown the immense value of professional armed forces. The provocation, tension and strain of service in Northern Ireland would have been very difficult for a conscript service.

As our services become ever more sophisticated the need for ever more highly skilled people grows. A petty officer in the Navy these days is a highly skilled technician. The Navy is very different from what it was even 20 years ago. Therefore, I am not arguing against a professional armed force, although I am putting up a warning. I am not altogether sure how long Britain will be able to fund a fully professional armed service to the extent that we have been doing. I say bluntly that if people start saying that we must make slashing cuts in the British Army of the Rhine, I for one would be perfectly prepared to consider the continental system.

I am committed to a professional armed service as long as it is possible to maintain and sustain it. If our national economic difficulties go on and our national economic decline continues and we cannot fund the necessary level of armed services, we shall have to reconsider the matter. That is a separate point. It is part of the philosophy that underlies the resistance inside the Ministry of Defence to this scheme. The Ministry does not think that it has a social obligation. It thinks that it is all right to be cocooned in a wholly professional atmosphere, and it is wrong. If it is not forced in this small way to widen its horizons and to take on a social obligation—at no extra cost to the defence budget but at considerabl extra cost in terms of effort and energy—we shall all regret it.

I wish the Minister all strength to his elbow. Frankly, he will not be able to carry out such a scheme unless it is made abundantly clear on the Floor of the House of Commons, on as much of a cross-party basis as is humanly possible, that the scheme is, in origin, right. It has been badly conducted and poorly carried out and it has not had the necessary commitment.

The Secretary of State must bring the chiefs into a room and give them their marching orders. The Ministry of Defence is one of the best Ministries in Whitehall. When the Secretary of State says that something should be done, it is done. People must be told that the scheme will be given priority. The one thing that the Secretary of State must get from the Chancellor of the Exchequer is a commitment that the scheme will be funded by the MSC funds and not the Ministry of Defence. I hope that that message will go loud and clear to the Secretary of State and the Chancellor and that the Government will act quickly.

10.28 pm

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): I support the motion of my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart). The House not only congratulates him on it but is thankful to him for giving us this opportunity to have this important debate.

I strongly support the idea of voluntary military service. It is good for the youth of our nation and it is for the nation in that it enhances our defence capability. In addition, it enhances our social fabric, particularly the talents and occupations of our young people.

But, as the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) has already said, the armed forces have consistently poured cold water on such ideas on the ground of cost. The budget should be shared not only by the MSC vote, but, if necessary, by the Departments of

Health and Social Security and the Home Office. Those Department have something to gain by having young people in the armed forces.

The second reason why the armed forces tend to pour cold water on the scheme is that they object to the mix with the regular forces. I am currently serving as a Territorial soldier in a regular infantry brigade—the 1st Infantry Brigade at Tidworth. I have seen that the integration of part-time and regular soldiers can work extremely well. There is a role to play.

I believe that defence is essentially capability times will. That is important, because if the capability or will is zero, the equation is nil. It is interesting to note that there is strong reason to suspect that Mr. Costa Méndez advised President Galtieri that the British did not have the will to defend the Falklands, primarily because we showed a lack of will by withdrawing forces from the east of Suez and the Mediterranean only a few years before.

This form of youth service and voluntary national service will enhance not only our capability but our will. The primary role of the armed forces is the defence of our national interest in times of war and peace and that implies two basic capabilities. First, we must exert a presence to deter aggression and to monitor or act in a surveillance role. Secondly, the most obvious role is to exert a decisive hitting power.

Modern sophisticated armed forces are extremely expensive. Integrated weapons systems and the highly trained and highly skilled manpower needed to operate them are very expensive, and the expense is growing fast. I believe that an issue which will haunt not only this Government but every Government for decades to come will be how we can continue to afford the enormous escalating bill for defence. I think that voluntary national service could have a tremendous impact on that bill.

The hitting power capability is highly sophisticated and therefore highly expensive. It is an ideal role for regular forces who often prove their excellence. The presence role is much less highly technical and involves little more than basic training. None the less, it is very important and involves a great deal of manpower. It concerns me greatly that exercise Brave Defender showed that we are woefully lacking in the presence role in the defence of the country if it comes to a war. For the total defence of this nation to be truly effective, we need much more manpower, particularly in what I call the presence, surveillance and deterrence role. I think that that is ideally fitted for the Territorial Army, the reserve forces and the home defence force.

It is interesting that at a time of need for manpower, which exercise Brave Defender must have written large in the eyes of Ministers in the Ministry of Defence, we have high youth unemployment. What a marvellous coincidence. I agree strongly with the right hon. Member for Devonport in that I think that the armed forces have a part to play in the social role of the Government. That must be taken on board by my hon. Friend the Minister.

I agreed to speak for less than five minutes, so I shall say no more. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham. I shall not repeat what he has said, because I agree with it, but I should like to thank him for his motion and say that I strongly support it. The idea of applying the youth training scheme to voluntary national service is excellent, and it is in the national interest. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take serious note of his proposal.

10.34 am

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): I join other hon. Gentlemen in welcoming the debate. I congratulate the hon. Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart), with whom I have worked closely on other matters unconnected with today's debate. We have had an interesting and excellent debate so far.

I hope that the House will bear with me while I try to analyse some of the background as to how we got to our present position. We have to put the debate in the context of a growing interest among the public and in the House in schemes of national and community service.

The scheme that has been presented this morning does not stand on its own. Many other organisations and personalities have put forward schemes on parallel lines, if not of the same strength or in the same way. The whole area of community or national service for young people is an idea which had been persistently, if intermittently, attractive to politicians of all parties. It has also found widespread support among the public, including supporters of all parties. That is not surprising, certainly at a time of high unemployment and of a shortage of skilled people.

The idea that young people should apply themselves to the benefit of others and do useful work while acquiring the habit of diligence and the attitude of service, has a compelling simplicity, especially when so many young people are cooling their heels on the dole and many of the general public suspect that they are acquiring an outlook which will serve them and society ill in later life.

In 1980 and 1981 an organisation called Youth Call emerged as a movement for compulsory community-national service. An associated poll by *The Observer* at that time found a majority of the public in support of a national community service. Later, in 1984, there was a further wave of interest. Opinion polls were conducted and given extensive coverage in national newspapers. The surprisingly high figure of 80 per cent. favoured either voluntary or compulsory community national service. An associated study was carried out by David Marsland which claimed to identify hundreds of thousands of jobs which could usefully be done by participants in a national community service scheme. It is clear that the notion of this form of scheme and service by young people strikes a chord with the general public and it is right that it should receive the most serious consideration by the House.

I want to spend some time on the principles which should guide that consideration. This morning's debate has already shown that there are some serious ambivalences in what is intended among many people who might have a general concern and think that some form of national or community service is a good idea.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that the armed services would have a very important role to play in the theme he is developing?

Mr. Sheerman: Indeed. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will allow me to develop my theme because this is a debate which we should take seriously, and I want to underline and analyse some of the background. I think that that is how we should deal with a serious debate, which I think the hon. Member for Beckenham intended.

We must not only acknowledge but state with the utmost vehemence that there are hundreds of thousands of

[Mr. Sheerman]

young people who are currently without work and without hope. There can be little doubt that their talents are wasting, their skills, if they have them, are withering, and their attitudes to life and work are deteriorating. There are 500,000 people under 25 who have been unemployed for over six months. A third of a million are unemployed and have never had a job since leaving school. Meanwhile, there are jobs to be done to the benefit of the community in social services, the health service and in caring of all kinds.

There is work to be done in the environment beautifying our cities and repairing and building the national stock of housing, railways, roads and canals, just to name a few. We must not assume that the unemployed are idle in their enforced leisure, but we know enough about the number who desperately want to work and do something creative to know that satisfying, constructive work is badly needed.

Secondly, in these days of refusal by the Government to acknowledge the need to support and properly fund the many badly needed services, we must proclaim the fundamental importance of introducing all young people to the values of caring for others, respect for the environment and commitment to public service. Not only are such values sadly lacking among many of the alienated youth in the inner cities, but they are lacking, perhaps more so, among the young ex-public school fogies whose lives are sheltered from the realities of life for those without the benefit of a silver spoon, and in whom the absence of caring attitudes is, for that reason, more reprehensible.

Thirdly, we must note the importance to employers of having young employees who have had an opportunity to develop their personal qualities, can work easily with others and have self-reliance and a capacity for initiative and leadership, to which a period in service to the community could undoubtedly contribute. Self-esteem, a sense of responsibility and overall maturity are of value not just for the individual but for the employer and society as a whole.

Mr. Jim Spicer: The hon. Gentleman is developing his theme extremely well, but I wonder when he will address himself to the main point of the debate. He has avoided any discussion about national service and the terms of the debate.

Mr. Sheerman: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. However, I should like to proceed with my analysis and then I shall come back to that point.

All those arguments point strongly in the direction of national service for youth, but there are some dangers. Once I have looked at some of the dangers, I shall come back to the terms of the motion. The first danger is the spectre of compulsion. Schemes that proclaim their voluntary character often become, in practice or through the dictates of implementing them equitably, overlaid with compulsion, as one of the prime movers of Youth Call, Jane Prior, found to her distress. We have begun to witness that in the youth training scheme.

I was interested to hear the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) develop his argument, which revealed the difference between what was intended for a national service scheme in the armed forces and what it might develop into. Would it be a scheme, as is intended by the hon. Member for Beckenham, which would eventually supply a military need and be an asset to the armed forces, or would it be a scheme for the most alienated, deprived and unqualified of our young people, to give them a short, sharp shock? The ambivalence of that came out clearly in the right hon. Gentleman's remarks. I also had a feeling that an element of compulsion to go on to those schemes was an underlying theme of the right hon. Gentleman's general argument.

The first danger is the spectre of compulsion. Secondly, there is the danger that those schemes can become confined to young people who are unemployed and disadvantaged, as the right hon. Member for Devonport said. Hence, they often entrench the very things that one is trying to get rid of. They entrench social division and resentment because they are for a particular sort of young person—not for all youth, but for a particular sort of problem youth. That is a very real danger.

Many people see clearly the advantages of national service of one sort or another for other people's unemployed children, while, of course, their own will be far too busy doing important things such as taking A-levels and preparing for university, or even going on to a commission in the Army, Navy or Air Force.

Thirdly, there is the problem of how young people's co-operation and commitment is managed—the essence of the service ideal. How can it be retained in the long term, in the face of any element or threat of compulsion? Fourthly, there is the practical problem of payment. If it is too low, compulsion becomes necessary to enforce participation, and the schemes run the risk of the stigma of cheap labour. If the payment is too high, the cost may bear comparison with alternatives that have more value for young people and society as a whole. Then there is the problem of job substitution. There is little net additional virtue in a scheme that displaces as many good works as it accomplishes.

Finally, there is militarism, and the point at which a concern to encourage caring dissipates into a desire to promote self-discipline. That is to be promoted by the curious paradox of attempting to induce it by an overdose of discipline imposed externally through a military regime. One acute observer described Youth Cell in 1981 as

"an unholy alliance of cranks and aging militarists".

I do not think that most people who have contributed to the debate can be classified under either of those heads, but the ideals of community service deserve better champions than that.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): The hon. Gentleman said that he is against compulsion. Does he mean only complusion for military service, or would he be against compulsion for a scheme that combined service to the community and military service?

Mr. Sheerman: I should be fundamentally against compulsion for any such scheme, as my colleagues and I have been fundamentally against any compulsion to enter youth training schemes or community programmes.

At the end of the day, any proposal for a form of national service must face the fundamental issue provided so effectively by another organisation, called Youth Choice, which grew up to oppose the ill-thought-out proposals of Youth Call. What is it that young people want and need? Instead of treating young people as a problem to be eliminated, we need to recognise them as a potential to be enlisted. In recent surveys, while 80 per cent. of all

respondents favoured national community service of some sort, 82 per cent. of those aged 15 to 24 preferred a proper job or a college place to any sort of community service. The most pressing problem for those young people and our society as a whole is how to train those young people and how to enlist them as full, contributing and valued members of our society. There is room in the programmes for all young people's education, training and preparation for life for an element of community or national service, but it must be part of a comprehensive scheme for helping young people to achieve the transition to the financial, occupational and personal independence to which they are entitled. That is the anlaysis that lies behind the motion that we are debating.

The Labour party believes in having a fully professional army. It believes that it should be a voluntary army, not an enlisted or enforced army. We do not believe that there should be compulsory national service. We also believe, with other hon. Members who have spoken today, that there is an enormous capacity and capability for the armed services to train people. As others have said this morning, the tragedy of our nation is that there are about 4 million unemployed people. We also have a shortage of skilled people, which is affecting industries from the high-tech industries to an industry that the Minister and I know well —the textile industry.

We are having the debate in the context of hon. Members calling for the Army, the Navy and the Air Force to take an active role in skills training for young people. In that context, the proposals will take money from other organisations doing similar jobs. Conservative Members seem to think, as the right hon. Member for Devonport said, that such a scheme would be funded not by the defence budget, but by that of the Manpower Services Commission. That is rather odd. There is mass youth unemployment, but when all the figures are boiled down, the MSC spends less than £1.2 billion on those 400,000 young people. Moreover, it is ironic that although we are changing from a one-year to a two-year scheme, the budget will be practically the same.

Conservative Members have already said that we cannot get skills training on the cheap. We know that from our experience in the services. People cannot be trained to be competent, to have confidence in themselves and to make a real contribution to the services on the cheap. Training is expensive. The quality of training, the machinery, technology and the skills of the instructors at military establishments in Devonport, Portsmouth and elsewhere leave one full of envy by comparison with our youth training scheme, the community programme, skillcentres, or even our colleges of further education. The services take skills training very seriously.

If we believe in training our people, whether through the armed services, the MSC or through our education system, we must pay for it. The proposals in the motion come ill at a time when the Government have closed the skillcentre network. Interestingly enough, many of the instructors at skillcentres were trained in the armed forces, and in many ways the techniques used resemble those found in the armed services. Nevertheless, one third of our skillcentres have been closed, and many of them in the areas of high unemployment.

Most of the industrial training boards have been closed. Apparently we do not need planning in most of our industrial sectors. The levy system that ensured that employers carried out training has been swept away, and as a result there is now total dependence on voluntarism in training. Our employers pay only 0·15 per cent. of turnover towards training, compared with 2 or 3 per cent. in our competitor countries of Germany, Japan and America. Although a massive youth training scheme has been introduced, there has been a collapse in our apprenticeship system.

What on earth are we doing discussing this motion? Of course the Labour party believes in skills training. It would be very much in favour of using spare capacity in the armed services to train young people to a high level of competence, and of using all available resources. It is a disgrace to our nation if young people and adults are unemployed and without skills at a time when there is a capacity to train them in skillcentres or in the armed services. I go around the country and have seen for myself that the record of the past seven years is one of closures. Indeed, prime training capacity has been lost in the constituency of the right hon. Member for Devonport——

Dr. Owen: I do not quite understand whether the hon. Gentleman is in favour of expanding the armed forces' youth training scheme to two years and of finding the money to continue it. We all want to know the answer to that question.

Mr. Sheerman: I did not interrupt the right hon. Gentleman when he made his speech and I let him make it in his own way. However, I shall come to that point shortly.

The Labour party opposed the introduction of a youth training scheme in the services because it did not believe that a link with a military element in the programme——

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Sheerman: I shall not give way as I wish to finish my point.

We opposed the introduction of a youth training scheme in the armed services and we still oppose its introduction. Indeed, the take-up has been very small and represents a failure. Hon. Members have said that the small take-up is due to mischievous chiefs of staff not being in favour of the scheme. They say that Chiefs of Staff never wanted it, and have prevented it. But I do not believe that. I believe that young people were not attracted to the idea. There is some truth in the argument that the army did not go into the scheme very enthusiastically, but if that was so, the Government should have said that the programme was something that the Government wanted and should be delivered.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. John Lee): Is the hon. Gentleman saying that in the unlikely event of a Labour Government the armed forces youth training scheme would be stopped?

Mr. Sheerman: That would be a very serious consideration. After the next general election, the Labour Government will consider the skills needed and the potential for delivering them. The Labour party has nothing against using the capability of the armed services for training young people. I come back again to the speech by the Minister in 1980. The first year involved basic military training. The Labour party would certainly be against that as a component. The next part was community work, and the third part was industrial and craft training.

[Mr. Sheerman]

I do not think that the Labour party would find anything wrong with the latter two parts of the scheme. A Labour Government would find nothing wrong with using the armed services capability for training, but they would not want military training. The difference between the two types of training should be stressed.

The right hon. Member for Devonport started by talking about the parallel with the head-start programme, and the desire to use the fine skills that exist in the armed services to train people. He talked about a scandalous lack of investment in skill training, and I absolutely agree with that. However, once one starts talking about using the armed services for training, two arguments quickly emerge. For example, the hon. Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) wants 15,000 people to be trained for 100 days with the possibility of them being interested in becoming recruited as professionals into the services. The hon. Gentleman believes in that argument, and I accept that it has a respectable pedigree. But I must say that I do not agree with it. However, it is disturbing that the right hon. Member for Devonport should begin with that sort of argument, but end up identifying the role of the armed services as being targeted on the low achiever, those with drug problems, and those suffering from the dreadful deprivation of our inner cities.

The hon. Member for Dorset, West (Mr. Spicer) put his finger on the flaw in the argument. It is common sense —the take-up of the youth training scheme in the armed services bears this out—that there would be minimal take-up of two or three-year schemes for underprivileged youngsters unless they were made compulsory. The Social Democrats have taken a great interest in this. Indeed, they take a great interest in anything which the opinion polls say might win them some votes. The danger of the alliance's attitude is that implicit in its arguments is that it would make the scheme compulsory for underprivileged youngsters.

Dr. Owen: I specifically excluded that suggestion. It is a typical slur from the hon. Gentleman. I made it clear that that was neither our wish or our intention. Indeed, it would be completely against my philosophy and of that of the Social Democratic party. The hon. Gentleman has widened the debate into discussing a national volunteer community service, although I thought it was confined to the armed services, but he still does not accept that the present services scheme is training people. I gather that he would not wish that scheme to continue, but similar schemes have been used in many countries to give youngsters a head start. Some police forces have taken on low achievers to try to encourage black people to join the force. The idea is to give people a special start. The hon. Gentleman, with his Socialist philosophy, should be in favour of such a scheme.

Mr. Sheerman: My Socialist philosophy, which the right hon. Gentleman so recently shared, leads me to believe that we should have special programmes for underprivileged youngsters, but the Labour party does not believe that they should come within the ambit of the armed services and it does not believe that they should be made compulsory. The right hon. Gentleman has no right to suggest that I am casting a slur on his speech or his reputation, if that was necessary, by saying that the logic of his argument leads to compulsion. He did not say that he agreed with compulsion, but the logic of his argument leads to that conclusion. If there was no compulsion, youngsters would not take up the scheme.

When one gets behind the right hon. Gentleman's soft words and tones, one finds the more militaristic wing of the argument. I do not wish to be too hard on the hon. Member for Beckenham, but he used the language not of the short, sharp shock, which proved so disastrous for our young offenders, but of the short, sharp challenge. The right hon. Member for Devonport and Conservative Members have something in common. They believe that short, sharp shocks for delinquent youngsters, for youngsters with problems and for low achievers is the way to sort them out. Anyone who read the fascinating analysis of the right hon. Gentleman's political ideas that was written by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) will have seen the interesting link between his ideas and those of the Tory party on short, sharp challenges.

Mr. Wilkinson: The hon. Gentleman's speech is neither short nor sharp.

Mr. Sheerman: Indeed. The interventions threw me a little off the main thrust of my speech, but I shall end now.

The Labour party wants a professional Army. It does not want a national service that brings in 15,000 people for 100 days and pays them double the YTS training allowance. The Labour party believes that we must expand all our resources to train our people to their fullest potential. Youngsters are crying out for such training. The Labour party admires the competence of our professional armed services and believes that they could play a major role in a unified and co-ordinated attempt to bring British youngsters to the level of skills and competence that has been achieved by our industrial competitors. However, we do not want such training to have a military element. Some hon. Members may say that the Opposition want to have their cake and eat it, but we believe that that is a sensible alternative.

11.5 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. John Lee): It may be convenient to the House if I intervene now. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) on the wording of his motion, which I commend to the House. I am grateful for his kind comments about our reserve forces, and I praise his research skills in revealing my past.

The Government have given the reserve forces the high priority that they deserve. We have set about the expansion of the reserves for all three services, and we have reason to be proud of what we have achieved. I shall explain how far we have got, and what we plan for the future.

We are making good progress with the planned expansion of the Royal Naval Reserve and the Royal Marines Reserve. Thanks to an excellent response to our recruiting advertising, the Royal Naval Reserve's strength is close to the target we set ourselves, and the Royal Marines Reserve is well on target to reach its expanded ceiling of 1,580 during the next few years.

The Territorial Army had done just as well. I am pleased to say that it is now more than 77,000 strong, an increase of about 18,000 since 1979. The current annual increase is in excess of the 3,000 a year required to meet

expansion targets. The second phase of our plans includes the formation of six new infantry battalions, two more Royal Engineers airfield damage repair squadrons and a new Army Air Corps squadron. That shows the scale of what we are achieving.

We have enjoyed similar success with the Home Service force. About 92 per cent. of its strength turned out for exercise Brave Defender last September and, despite its recent formation, it proved to be fully capable of discharging its central task of guarding key points. Since the beginning of last year, 42 of the eventual 47 companies have begun to form, and recruitment has reached 69 per cent. of an establishment of nearly 5,000.

The Royal Air Force Reserve forces have also made strides. The Royal Auxiliary Air Force especially has been undergoing a major expansion since 1979 from a strength of a mere 250 towards about 1,300—a fivefold increase which illustrates the importance that we attach to the reserves. That expansion has led to the assumption of some new roles for the Royal Auxiliary Air Force, including ground defence, air defence gunnery, movements and aeromedical evacuation.

The Royal Naval Auxiliary service has a slightly different status as an unpaid civilian volunteer service. It has a vital wartime role in support of the Navy at key United Kingdom ports and anchorages. Its tasks now include the manning and running of about a third of the vessels that would be needed in those areas, and this splendid force will be increasing in numbers from the present 2,800 to 3,000. Recruiting for this is well under way.

Of course, this pattern of expansion throughout our reserve forces would be of little value if we had not at the same time produced the equipment that they need. The scale of this varies greatly according to their roles. Some reservists are intended to release individual Regular service men in time of crisis for tasks which only they can undertake; in other cases, reservists will form up in complete units alongside regular units. Last year, for example, we announced several trials into the employment of Royal Auxiliary Air Force and RAF volunteer reserve personnel — 70 strong — in several further roles, including a 2,000 — strong auxiliary support force similar to the Army's Home Service force, a trial of two university air squadrons of RAF volunteer reserve instructors which, if successful, would release qualified flying instructors to the front line, the formation of a further RAFVR intelligence flight at Strike Command to provide intelligence support at headquarters and front-line units, and a two-year trial into the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of recruiting RAF volunteer reservists to serve as aircrew in regular RAF squadrons, in aircraft such as Nimrod, MR and VC10s. Other possible uses of reservists, in ground and aircrew roles, are under consideration for the future.

The take-up and use of civilian helicopters was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham, and he has taken up the issue in single-service debates. The cost of arming civilian helicopters would be extremely high. In the current financial climate, the installation, support and crew training involved with weapon systems alone would be prohibitively expensive. However, it is clear that larger civilian helicopters could undertake a number of important tasks. We are studying this possibility in the wide-ranging examination of the future role of support helicopters, about which I gave details to the House during the RAF debate on 26 February.

Against this background of expansion we are investing in new equipment for the reserves. For example, by the middle of 1986 all 11 RNR sea-training centres will be equipped with the new River class of fleet minesweeper, one of which, HMS Spey, was launched by my wife. New fast patrol boats should be in service by the autumn.

But it is not enough even to provide men and equipment. Thorough training is also essential if our reserves are to be fitted to meet the responsibilities that are placed on them. We shall maintain our campaign to educate employers and persuade them of the importance of offering employees every assistance in the continued participation in reserve force activities. The new independent national committee for employer liaison under the chairmanship of Mr. Tommy McPherson, is intended to reinforce this process. Employers' whole-hearted support is vital to our plans

All in all, I believe that the Government can be proud of this record. As I have indicated, we have a wide range of improvements under way, and I can assure the House that under this Government the reserves will be no less of a priority in the future.

I would like also to take this opportunity to mention the current manning situation in the armed forces. Although there are continuing shortfalls in trained strengths for officers of some 1,000, or 2·7 per cent., service men and women's numbers are very satisfactory, being only 900, or 0·3 per cent., down on trained requirement. However, these overall figures do obscure larger shortfalls in particular areas, especially specialists, where competition for available manpower is traditionally fierce in the labour market, and the attractions of alternative employment outside the forces that much greater. Shortages also in part reflect the overriding control of ceilings on total manpower, covering both trained numbers and those under training. I am happy to say that recruitment overall to the Regular forces remains generally satisfactory. Most recruiting targets are being met. Voluntary outflow has not reached a critical level although it is causing concern, especially for Army officers.

My hon. Friend has at some length questioned the value of the armed services youth training scheme. This is, of course, part of the overall and wider youth training scheme which was introduced by the Government in 1983 because far too many young people were entering the labour market without skills or qualifications. We offered a year's broad-based training and planned work experience to 16 and some 17-year-olds and, three years later, the statistics of success speak for themselves. Since 1983, more than a million youngsters have joined YTS; two thirds of them go into work, further education or further training afterwards.

YTS has indeed been successful but the Government recognised that it could be made better. It was apparent that many youngsters on YTS and their employees wanted more occupationally relevant training, building on the foundation that we had already established. We recognised also that we should aim to offer all YTS entrants the chance to gain a recognised vocational qualification or credit towards one. So from next month we shall be investing £1 billion a year of public money, offering two years' training to 16-year-old school leavers and one year for 17-year-old leavers. Two year YTS will be an integral

[Mr. John Lee]

and permanent part of vocational education and training provision offering opportunities for qualifications which employers respect and young people value.

Comprehensive provision is, therefore, already available to meet the training needs of 16 and 17-years-old, including those youngsters who are interested in taking part in the armed services. Our scheme has been in place since August 1983 and runs parellel to the civilian YTS. Since the start of the scheme the ASYTS has attracted 9,000 applications for some 6,000 places. Of those applying 2,700 have been accepted and over 2,200 trainees have already attended courses. I am particularly pleased that 860 youngsters have subsequently converted to regular service engagements. Not surprisingly, having acquired a taste for service life, trainees want the benefit of service pay and work. Although I am disappointed that it has not been possible to fill all the places available on the scheme, I am nonetheless satisfied that the ASYTS has made a useful contribution in the important area of offering young people training and worthwhile work experience. Many of those who have entered the scheme have done well and some have reached impressive standards. A wide range of trades and skills are taught, including driving, secretarial, cooking and electronics. Excellent opportunities are also offered for pariticipation in sports and other activities. Trainees should find that their prospects of finding a job after completing the scheme will be enhanced considerably by the high quality of training that they receive in the services.

Of course, ASYTS trainees are required to train and work alongside regular counterparts on existing courses, whose own standards are high. No doubt our requirements for high standards of entry have an effect on the entry level. However, if we were to lower minimum standards the weaker trainees would have difficulty in keeping up with the training and work experience, and that would be unfair to the individuals concerned. I listened with care to the arguments advanced by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) about the high entry standard that we demand. I shall consider what he said about a possible lowering of the standard to accommodate the wider scheme that he has in mind.

I illustrate my point by saying that in this financial year we are offering 2,209 places, and so far there have been 2,407 applicants, of which 852 have been accepted and 810 have attended courses. Although we have not filled all the places available, there has been a healthy rise in the level of recruitment in the latter part of 1985. All of the months from August-November set new strength records for the scheme, producing an average strength of 700 for those months. Hon Members will be aware of our plans to extend the current one-year scheme to a two-year scheme in line, as far as possible, with the civilian YTS. I am happy to give the right hon. Member for Devonport that assurance. The two-year YTS aims, to give all trainees the opportunity to seek improved courses that result in recognised qualifications. We hope that it will prove possible for trainees to be on courses by April 1987 which ofer the opportunity of attaining a qualification or credit towards one. In the transitional period some courses will not offer the prospect of a qualification at their end, whilst we explore ways of complying with these new arrangements. Nonetheless, such courses will continue to offer valuable training and work experience.

I believe that the ASYTS is providing, and will continue to provide, an excellent opportunity for young people to gain training and work experience, and we wish that there were greater demand for it. However, it is not, and was never intended to be, any kind of an answer to the relatively minimal and very specialised recruitment and manning difficulties that exist in the armed forces, the basis of which are being properly investigated and which we shall do our utmost to remedy. I wish to put on record that within the Ministry of Defence we have an excellent civilian YTS scheme and about 680 youngsters are on it at present. The scheme is split almost equally between the United Kingdom and Germany.

However, I regret to have to say that, laudable though the objective is, basic training on that sort of scale for so short a period would be questionable both for the individual and in defence policy terms. The modern Army is professional and highly trained. However, I take the point made by the right hon. Member for Devonport about the dangers of a professional force and the MOD being somewhat cocooned from the community at large, and we must take his observations and comments on board and consider them, I accept what he said about the possible dangers. Training is specialised, in depth and inevitably expensive. Given the finite resources available, it is essential to achieve an adequate return on our investment in training in the form of many years of service by the individual soldier.

As the House is aware, it is our policy for the Army to maximise its deterrent force by shifting resources and manpower from support functions to the frontline operational units. Part of this policy of trimming the tail and sharpening the teeth has been to ensure that the training organisation is maintained at the most economic level to meet its task. Consequently there is now little, if any, spare capacity in our training organisation. We simply, therefore, do not have the headroom on anything like the scale envisaged by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham to train 15,000 additional junior soldiers.

Inevitably, there is also a cost aspect to that. On 1985-86 capitation rates, 15,000 recruits on strength for 100 days would cost some £40 million in pay and personal costs alone. I have to say to my hon. Friend that I see little prospect of such funding being made available from the defence budget or by the Manpower Services Commission. I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Devonport and other hon. Members who have spoken in that they did not suggest that the funding for the wider scheme that they advocate should come from our increasingly tight Ministry of Defence budget, but from wider Government resources.

It would also be fair to say that the young man or woman would get little benefit from only three months in the Army. It is too short a period to appreciate the practical and stimulating side of Army life, and to do more, than merely "square bashing". There would be no opportunity properly to learn any of the specialists skills that together make up the panoply of the modern Army. For the purposes of youth training in skills which are valuable in the civil life of this country, I believe we must continue to look to the armed services youth training scheme which, as I mentioned earlier, offers sound training and is now to be extended over two years and allied to a trade qualification.

In the specific case of candidates wanting Army experience between school and university, which I think

my hon. Friend mentioned as an example of those who might be attracted by his scheme, I should explain that we recognise the value of short-term attachments for potential officers, and make provision for it, in a number of ways. For the candidate of clear officer potential there is the opportunity to do a short course at the royal military academy, Sandhurst followed by up to 18 months' experience on a unit attachment with a short service limited commission—about 50 a year are taken in on that basis—prior to going up to university. I should emphasise that the SSLC is for top quality candidates who will be ambassadors for the Army in their university careers. Many of them take up regular commissions or join the Territorial Army later. Another opportunity, this time for those whose officer potential is less clear-cut, is provided candidates, mostly school leavers, considering entering the competition for a regular commission. To enhance their leadership qualities and provide a foretaste of Army life they can be sent to one of the training depots of the divisions or corps of the Army. Again, this "O" type engagement, as it is called, is relatively limited in numbers, there are only 270 at present, and geared to officer candidates. Clearly, they are not an appropriate vehicle for an expansion of the numbers of ordinary school leavers sought by my hon. Friend. But they illustrate the importance we attach to attracting the best young people into the armed forces, and to giving them the right opportunity to succeed.

When asked yesterday at Question Time by my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), who has pursued this theme, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said:

"I know my hon. Friend's views on this but it would mean an enormous change in the whole of our defence policy which is founded on professional Armed Services, and which has served the country well. Although I know that he would like to give many young people an opportunity of belonging to something like the Armed Services I do not think I can promise him anything on this so far as I can see in the future. We prefer to rely on the Armed Services youth training scheme to give some people the opportunity."—[*Official Report*, 20 March 1986; Vol 94, c. 410.]

That sums up the Government's view, and while I am conscious of an increasing interest on all sides of the House in the sort of scheme that my hon. Friend has in mind, I can hold out no hope of a change in our policy in the foreseeable future. Once again, I congratulate my hon. Friend on the wording of his motion, which I commend to the House.

11.23 am

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): We have been fortunate to have this motion introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart), who has immense experience in this area and has consistently produced imaginative schemes for the improvement of our armed forces, particularly for the Army. We have also been fortunate to have the considered response of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement on behalf of the Ministry of Defence.

I would not wish the debate to be too narrow. It was good that the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) alluded to the overall strategic context within which we must consider the issues before us. The fact is that defence expenditure is to decrease in real terms during the years ahead. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is formulating a minor review to see whether all our commitments and programmes can be carried out within the budgetary allocations that are anticipated. In my judgment, there will be a real danger that we shall not be able to carry out all our commitments or to see to fruition all the equipment programmes which our armed services would desire. In other words, something has to give.

Many Conservative Members have always insisted that a cost-effective option for the Government in those circumstances is to make increased use of the volunteer reserves and the auxiliaries who are paid only when they train or are used. My hon. Friend outlined the significant enhancements which have already taken place in our reserve forces in all three services. We are all delighted that they have occurred, and it is a credit to the Government. We see further potential along those lines.

Thirty years ago the 1956 White Paper announced the end of conscription. In that year there were 770,000 men and women under arms in the British armed forces. Today the figure is less than half of that as the number has fallen to 327,000. One key and crucial responsibility is to carry out the vital NATO commitment, the Brussels treaty commitment of the British Army of the Rhine, which involves 55,000 men plus a tactical air force on the continent of Europe in peacetime, with all volunteer forces. That major continental commitment is essentially a manpower intensive commitment, and in time of emergency or war we plan greatly to increase the strength of BAOR and, indeed, to more than double it. This can be done only by weakening the British home base, so it is more important than ever that we should have strong reserves to augment the front line in Germany and to beef up the defence of the home base.

Our reserve forces are woefully inadequate and constitute some 290,000 men and women—0·5 per cent. of the population. They include the Ulster Defence Regiment as well as all the other reserve formations. Our reserve forces are clearly inadequate compared with those of our neighbours. All the main continental neutrals have reserve forces far larger than ours—for example, the Swedes, the Swiss, the Yugoslavs, and, indeed, even, the Austrians. Every Warsaw pact country has many more reserves that we have, except for Hungary, and every NATO country has far larger reserve forces than ours, except for the Netherlands, Portugal and Canada. As a percentage of our population, our reserves are only 0·5 per cent., whereas in NATO as a whole the percentage is 1·7 per cent., in Warsaw pact countries it is 1·9 per cent., in the United States it is 1 per cent. and in the Soviet Union it is 2 per cent. That is bad enough, but what makes the matter worse is that, because our armed forces are all regular and, therefore, expensive to maintain, the size of our armed forces as a whole as a percentage of the population is far lower than that of most comparable countries.

For ourselves, 0·59 per cent. of the population is in the armed forces as a whole. In NATO the figure is 1·35 per cent., in the Warsaw pact 1·65 per cent., in the United States 0·9 per cent. and in the USSR 1·9 per cent. As the defence budget will decline in real terms and as for political reasons I see little likelihood of a change in our basic strategic commitments, we must look at manpower policies and enhance our reserves.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Does my hon. Friend agree that he should also consider the important role of the reservist in line with the serious haemorrhage of experienced and highly trained regular Army officers who are deciding to leave the forces?

Mr. Wilkinson: My hon. Friend is right. That is a problem not only in the Army but in the Royal Air Force, which is the service I know better. To their credit, the Government are seeking to enhance the training available to the regular reserves and to give them a week's training after three years, and this is an improvement. The problem to which my hon. Friend alludes is serious.

In Europe as a whole, as I pointed out in the debate on the Royal Air Force on 26 February, when I urged that we should get away from the taboo of discussing national service, we are the only major country without conscription. The others that do not have conscription are Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, San Marino, Liechstenstein and Andorra. They are all fine countries in their way, but, with the sole exception of Luxembourg, they are neutral and they are all, significantly, small countries.

In the world as a whole, 61 per cent. of the states have national service. Perhaps the most interesting exception tends to be Commonwealth countries, perhaps because they follow the British model. In the NATO order of battle, one third of the front line troops would be conscripts. In the Warsaw pact order of battle, two thirds of the front line troops would be conscripts. Therefore, at a time of high unemployment—in 1984, 25 per cent. of young people between the ages of 18 and 24 were unemployed — we should carefully reconsider the potential merits of national service. Perhaps those who did not go on to higher education or secure a job within a reasonable time after leaving school or those who do not attend a YTS programme or some other worthwhile training scheme should do national service.The counter argument was that put forward by the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), that it would be wrong for only the disadvantaged to have to do national service. He could be right. If that is the case, and if we take the arguments implicitly put by the right hon. Member for Devonport, perhaps it should be a universal scheme, if that is the way we wish to go.

In "virgin soldier" days, in the old-style post-war national service, there were many examples of occasions when conscripts saw operational service — in Korea, Kenya, Malaya and Cyprus. They were not criticised; their performance on the whole was good. Today, fortunately, the opportunity for operational service by conscripts, if national service were reintroduced, would probably be small, but there is a chance for overseas service. They can go to Belize, Gibraltar, Cyprus, the Falklands or Germany. This would be valuable experience to them in addition to the technical training that they can receive.

I have always argued that one of the principal benefits of national service is the technical training, and that is why the admirable, in other respects, scheme that my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham has proposed is deficient. As my hon. Friend the Minister said, 100 days is not an adequate period in which to learn a technical skill that will assure a conscript a job in today's industry and commerce. People need longer than that. Interestingly, perhaps for demographic reasons above all, the Germans have just increased their national service from a year to 15 months, and got it through the Bundestag without too much of a problem.

For strategic reasons, we should look at this matter again. Reserves have an important part to play in increasing the contact between the regular forces and the community and in providing training opportunities for young people. We need to be able to expand our front line more than we can at present because our reserves are inadequate. If we had national service, we could more easily fulfil our central European commitment through BAOR, and we would find it easier to have trained personnel in the reserves.

The sector that I know best is the air reserves. The Royal Air Force offers opportunities for technical training better than any other service except the Navy. I can suggest three clear flying roles for the auxiliaries. One is the light support helicopter role, which has already been identified and which the Government intend to fulfil as soon as resources are available. The second is the point defence role with the Hawk, currently fulfilled by the tactical weapon unit instructors. I suggest that it should be done with dedicated aeroplanes — the new Hawk 200 single seater aircraft, for example. Thirdly, there is inshore maritime patrol. Interestingly, I have here an advertisement from *Flight International* which says:

> "Due to possible expansion in UK offshore patrols on behalf of the Government, a well-established UK Company invites applications from ex coastal command, pilots, navigators radar operators."

Already the benefit of service-trained aircrew for carrying out of this important inshore role has been seen by the Ministry of Defence, and auxiliary squadrons should be created for the purpose.

I applaud the decision of Her Majesty's Government to allow volunteer reservists to fly as qualified flying instructors in the university air squadrons and as aircrew on VC10s and Nimrod aircraft. Therefore, I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to see whether volunteer reserve personnel could also serve as aircrew on the communications squadrons.

I whole-heartedly approve of this motion, admirably introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham, but the issue has to be examined somewhat more broadly. The debate is timely and worthwhile.

11.38 am

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) for giving us the useful opportunity to concentrate our attention on a way in which we might seek to match some real individual needs with some important needs of our society. The scheme that he has outlined would, of itself, be most valuable. I should like to see it as an element of a wider scheme, and I was glad that the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) widened the scope of the debate to allow us to consider taking the motion in a broader sense.

The personal needs that I have just mentioned are obvious to us all. It is a tragedy of this period in our national life that there are far too many unoccupied people — both young and old. There have been economic dislocations, which are the result of the interaction of many causes. The high birth rate of the 1960s led to large numbers of school leavers coming on to the jobs market only to find that the opportunities that they wanted were

not there. There have been the impacts of technological change and recession. Sadly, they have resulted in many people finding themselves out of jobs rather earlier in their working lives than they might have expected.

The problems caused by the recession, and of getting rid of inflation and overmanning have led to too many people finding that society appears to have no need for their services. It is not good enough simply to write off those people merely as the casualties of unfortunate and inevitable change. Nor, for a moment, do I suggest that the Government have done so. They have produced a succession of imaginative and valuable schemes to enable people to retrain and to assist in the process of adaptation. However, I think we all acknowledge that the scale of the problem is very great and that the useful, worthwhile remedies that the Government have offered do not adequately match the problem. We find, therefore, that many older people in our society have idle skills and unsatisfied idealism. They would like to find a role for themselves. Many people, both young and old, are left with the blighting feeling that society does not need them. They feel isolated.

It is an irony of our democratic history that, although with good intentions, our liberal state has arrogated to itself more and more power and taken upon itself more and more responsibility in all sorts of fields. This has led to an atrophying of the sense of individual, local responsibility and the sense of community. Because people feel isolated they are looking for new ways in which to find that sense of community and that sense of involvement and belonging that is a very deep human need. Sometimes they find it in delinquent fashions: in a kind of tribalism by joining gangs; sometimes they place an undue emphasis upon racial identity; sometimes they show an enthusiastic allegiance, which can be wholly innocent and positive, to football clubs.

The point that I am trying to illustrate is that people have a need to belong. Therefore, the Government have been right, as a central part of their strategy to seek to devolve responsibility back to individuals, families, businesses and, importantly, to voluntary organisations which can be a focus of loyalty and pride, which enable people to give service to the community and which strengthen their sense of belonging to the community. These personal and social needs interact with one another.

At another level, it is obvious that there is work that many of us would wish to be done but which we are unable to organise to have done by the conventional means of increased public expenditure and bureaucratic organisation. At one end of the age spectrum, help is needed for meals on wheels for the elderly. At the other end of the age spectrum, physically handicapped children need to be given help. All of us are aware of the inadequacy of the present provision of services. The only realistic prospect of improving and extending the provision of services is by means of enhancing the role of the voluntary organisations.

I have direct experience, as I am sure all hon. Members have in their constituencies, of the help that the voluntary services can give in enhancing the performance of the statutory provision of services. I have seen young people lending a hand and giving help in some of the very excellent sheltered housing accommodation that we have in Warwickshire. They give a great deal of help to old people and they derive an enormous amount of satisfaction from doing so. There is an enormous amount of work to be done for the environment by clearing derelict land and repairing and improving housing, thus making our inner cities better places in which to live and attracting back business and employment opportunities. The insulation of our housing stock is a project which remains to be carried out. Even though the price of oil has come down, it is no less rational or desirable to make that national commitment. However, we will not organise to do it at a national level other than, possibly, by looking to the voluntary services.

Hon. Members will be familiar with the community programmes in their constituencies. They may share my impression that people working on community programmes who suffered from a sense of rejection and isolation and from the traumatic experience of becoming unemployed or being unable to find a job have found, through their experience of the community programme, that they have been provided with an opportunity to belong, to serve and to develop real enthusiasm. The only shame is that the scheme remains as limited as it is.

I greatly welcome the expansion of the scheme, in successive phases, and the announcement by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget. Even so, the opportunities to enter such programmes are limited. Only young people who have been through a period in which they have been unable to find employment are eligible.

We have been unable to match those who want work, those who want to contribute, with the work that there is to be done, mainly because of the cost of running a full public sector scheme. There are other objections, too, to such an approach. I think that Conservative Members would have deep reservations about any attempt to organise the carrying out of these functions on a national scale. It is better that the way in which they are organised should be generated more spontaneously at local level.

Therefore, I support what I take to be the much broader implications of the proposals that are contained in the motion of my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham: a scheme of voluntary national service that would be nationwide. One could argue about the details, but it might consist of one-year units. I was attracted by the scheme to which my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement referred in his speech. In the days before the burden of his particular responsibilities fell upon his shoulders he advocated that scheme. Even in his official capacity I hope that he remains personally committed to a scheme that would contain the three elements of community service, military service and industrial training. I agree with him that if these experiences and this training are to be effective, one year is probably necessary to make the best of them. Although these opportunities should be available to all, on a voluntary basis, they should be directed mainly to the unemployed.

As other hon. Members have mentioned, it is notable, on the military side, that we are untypical of European countries. I think I am correct in saying that it is only Eire, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom in Europe that do not have a scheme of compulsory military service for young men. Since about 1956 it has been regarded as rather way out and eccentric to advocate the restoration of conscription. I say "way out and eccentric", but I defer with great respect to what was said by my hon. Friend the

[Mr. Alan Howarth]

Member for Ruislip-Northwood, (Mr. Wilkinson). Nevertheless he will acknowledge that he is a pioneer in advocating such ideas again in this country.

Politicians have perhaps misjudged what might be the national response. I recall that 10 years ago I was with Lord Thorneycroft, when he was the chairman of the Conservative party, in Liverpool. We held a meeting with social workers in Liverpool. I must confess that I braced myself, lifted an eyebrow and was rather startled when he suggested to the assembled social workers that there might be some merit in introducing conscription. However, I was educated by that meeting because the social workers took the point extremely seriously. They were ready to talk about it and to understand what might be the virtues of conscription.

Lord Thorneycroft did not mean a scheme of military conscription exclusively. He had in mind a scheme of national service. He was prepared to argue—I hope that I do not misrepresent him—that it should be compulsory for all young people to undertake some kind of service. His idea did not fall on stony ground. That suggestion was made 10 years ago, before the enormous unemployment problem was experienced on a national scale. But at that time Liverpool was already experiencing the great sadness of large-scale unemployment. Anyone who has seen the beautiful cathedral in Liverpool, which was finally completed after many years of construction and which stands amid a sea of desolation, must realise acutely the importance of finding new ways of enlisting all the latent energies in that great city and giving people the opportunity to work there and contribute.

I believe that staff would be available to operate a scheme of national voluntary service. There are large numbers of professional social workers and people employed professionally in voluntary organisations. I would not advocate a compulsory scheme, but I think that we can encourage young people to assume that this scheme shall be the next phase of experience for them after leaving school. Schools and employers could do much to steer young people in that direction.

I believe that we would want such a scheme to be part of a wider training programme. We should recognise the inadequacies of the present national provision for training. Last night, the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission, Mr. Nicholson, was reported as having uttered a scathing indictment of our limited training achievements compared with the Germans. He was not the first person to observe that fact. The Secretary of State for Employment has probably done more than anybody else to improve our national provision for training both in his time as chairman of the MSC before Mr. Nicholson took the post and currently. The Government are well seized of the problem and have been active and effective on this front.

There is still much to be done. A well-considered scheme of national voluntary service would give young people a systematic opportunity to gain not only technical skills and the experience and habit of work but a sense of obligation to the community. Those elements would ultimately be of value not only to them as human beings but to our economy.

I believe that the scheme should be in a formal relationship with the rest of the training system. We should give a young person a credit for undertaking a period of voluntary service. What the young person learns would be seen very much as part of the continuum of education and training stretching from, say, the age of 14 to 21.

I hope that employers' organisations will willingly and enthusiastically endorse this experience as an element of the wider programme. I believe that they will discover that the graduates of this national scheme of voluntary service will be attractive and useful recruits to their businesses.

I am grateful to the House for its tolerance in allowing me to go a little wide of the motion. I should like to come now to the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham. I am very attracted to his scheme. I do not feel well qualified to comment on its details, so I am happy to defer to my hon. Friend and to other hon. Members with greater experience. I regret the fact that the hon. Member for Huddersfield felt obliged to commit the Labour party to opposing the continuation of the youth training scheme in the armed services. I shall not enlarge on that point because the hon. Gentleman is not in his place.

I endorse the comments by my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood about the inadequacy of our reserve forces. I believe that a country that is not prepared to provide the means of defending itself adequately at a conventional level and to maintain adequate reserves of people trained in military skills will lack to some degree national self-respect. The scheme proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham would do much to improve our defence capacity and credibility.

We should be prepared to take the steps needed to counter an invasion. Heaven forbid that invasion should ever occur, but it must be a basic responsiblity of our society and Government to do what they can to ensure that our people are prepared to defend themselves. Presumably, a national scheme of voluntary military service would place the emphasis on local defence. The young people involved would identify with their localities and respond. I should have thought that, from the point of view of the Ministry of Defence, it would be economic and practical for localities to be defended by local people. I wonder whether that is part of the scheme envisaged by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham. We should prepare our population for the experinece of wartime. The Government have done much to strengthen civil defence, but it is still woefully inadequate.

If emphasis were placed on defence, as clearly it would be under such a scheme, I think that some of the fears of the Labour party would be seen to be inappropriate. The ethos of defence must surely be acceptable. There is no question of militarism or of preparing the nation to be militarily aggressive. That is certainly not contemplated. The emphasis is fairly and squarely on defence. We would also have the benefit of the practical skills learnt during military service training, although my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement has rightly cautioned us against having exaggerated hopes.

In considering these issues we must contemplate the melancholy question of cost. In looking not only at the military component but at the broader scheme we can distinguish between the gross costs, which would be not inconsiderable, and the net costs. The gross costs would include the cost of personal allowances paid to the volunteers for their cost of living, the cost of professional supervision and training, and the costs of administration, equipment, meals and perhaps travel. Those costs would be offset by important savings. The net costs would be considerably reduced as a result of savings on

unemployment and supplementary benefits, because participants in the scheme would be removed from the unemployment register.

I reject the option put forward by some people in considering such policies that a young person who refuses to take part in a voluntary scheme should be disqualified from receiving unemployment or supplementary benefits. If that happened, the scheme would, in effect, become compulsory. It is important for there to be no doubt about the voluntary character of the scheme. I believe also that firms would be willing to donate the services of people to train volunteers and to donate equipment. Therefore, the net costs need not be formidable.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham has introduced the debate at a timely moment, following my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's Budget in which he greately extended tax relief on charitable donations. That is extremely relevant.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has opened up the possibility for charities to have the financial strength to make a vastly greater contribution of the kind of which they are uniquely capable. At their best, charities are economic and efficient. They are motivated to meet local needs and have local knowledge and sensitivity. They sit loosely to convention and adapt to changing circumstances. They are animated by the enthusiasm of their voluntary members rather than by directives from on high, and respond to specific needs and not to abstract theories. Charities are well suited to engage and enthuse the energies of our young people.

By their very nature, charities cannot be regimented. But there is such a wide variety of charities up and down the country that between them all I am confident that if we continue to give them the fair wind the Government have given them they will play their part. To some degree we can co-ordinate the work. Charities are willing to look for a lead from Government Departments and are willing to co-ordinate themselves under various umbrellas. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations and the volunteer centres are well established and in many ways give a practical lead to a large number of diverse charities.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education recently established a national advisory council for youth services. That could perhaps play an important part in the task of co-ordinating a large range of activities. The cost of failing to provide these opportunities for young people will be great, not just in terms of the immediately quantifiable costs to the social security budget, but in terms of the cost of a generation of young people less disciplined and less committed to responsibility and to work in the service of the community. Those costs would accumulate.

The severest economists among my hon. Friend will say this is a waste of money that cannot be jusified; that we have to allow the free play of market forces; and that any extra public expenditure in this field will be at the expense of profitable businesses to which we should look for new jobs. There may be intellectual truth in what they say, but there is a powerful human argument for another course of the kind that I have attempted to sketch.

I support my hon. Friend's proposal. I should like to see his scheme amplified so that it becomes part of the wider scheme that would promote skills and carry out useful work. It would be beneficial not just in the provision of an improved capacity for the defence of the realm but would benefit the social services, the environment and education. Above all, it would be valuable in promoting social cohesion, a sense of mutual responsibility and true neighbourliness.

12.3 pm

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): I shall confine my remarks to dealing with the skilful exposition by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart). He has presented us with a unique opportunity for discussing the forces. I have the greatest respect for my hon. Friend, but whatever he may say I take the view that our reserve forces are insufficient to meet the needs they may be required to satisfy in an emergency. The reserve forces were shown to be insufficient in exercises Lionheart and Brave Defender.

Our reserve forces are vital not only for the defence of Europe and to NATO but for our defences at home. There is inadequate provision for home defence should any form of external aggression occur, because at that point we shall require many more troops to defend our own country. That is especially true when one considers that the Soviets have special infiltration forces. I think that it was my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) who said that local defences should have a local character so that they are able to recognise infiltrators in times of war. The scope of the debate allows me to extend my speech to that point.

I was interested in the speech of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) who said that the forces must not only accept responsibility for training their own members but must also make a contribution, as they are doing in the Army youth training services, to general training and discipline. Civil defence ought to be confined to a separate debate. Quite wrongly, national service was turned down because, if I remember correctly, the chiefs of staff advised the then Government that they could not afford the manpower to train the recruits and at the same time fulfil their commitments to NATO and their other commitments. At that time they had many commitments all over the world. On those grounds, and I gather on no other, they said that they could not undertake that training.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood said that at one time we had about 750,000 service men. Now we have only 300,000. The Army youth training scheme has been a great success, but its expense should not be entirely borne by the services Department. The right hon. Member for Devonport spoke about that. Although it is expensive, it provides training for people, and the money ought to come from sources other than the services. The skills people obtain from this scheme are enormous, and I am happy to note that the skills from this source are to be recognised. I am not sure how that is to be done, but some sort of qualification would help the participants. It would be a good idea if they had some sort of certificate or piece of paper that they could show to their future employers. It would show that they had taken part in the scheme and had been competent and reached a certain degree of efficiency.

The Minister spoke about pre-university training at Sandhurst. The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) said quite clearly what his party would do if it was in power: it would cut out the service element of the YTS altogether. That is part of its policy. If we find that we are short of reservists and cannot fulfil our obligations abroad and at home, and particularly in civil defence, we should consider the desirability of some form of

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compulsory national service. If we do that, I suggest that we call it, not national service, but community service, and that it should have a duration of one or two years. It should include the option for the participants of either military service or some form of community service which would be of use to the nation, such as road building. It should not be confined to military service and it should not be called national service but rather community service. That would instil into our youth something that they now lack—the discipline that we obtained from the original national service.

As many of my hon. Friends have hinted, I hope that as a result of this debate we shall have some form of national or community service. We should make sure above all that our home base is safe from attack in the event of a war when almost all our forces are deployed abroad. A small proportion should remain to look after our nation. After all, the ultimate objective of an armed force is not only to atack in Europe but to protect our nation at home and to preserve our home base.

12.10 pm

Mr. Geoff Lawler (Bradford, North): The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) and my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) were right to broaden the debate because it is important to look at the scheme in the overall context of resources available for young people and to see what priority the idea that we are debating should have when competing against various other ideas, governmental, voluntary or those that are just being proposed.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said that the root of this debate was the needs of the armed forces, or words to that effect. I should say that the root of the debate is the needs of young people and what we should do for them. We should then try to relate that to the needs of the community, although the two are necessarily intertwined.

Nobody can dispute the fact that the priority at the moment is those young people particularly in need, and they are, of course, the young unemployed. Other hon. Members have described graphically the seriousness of the situation.

We must look at two particular areas—the long-term youth unemployed, and the post-YTS unemployed. We have large numbers unemployed in both categories, and yet we have many needs within the community. Let me address myself to how we can correct that mismatch and use one to alleviate some of the problems of the other.

It is right that the bulk of Government resources at this time should be concentrated on training school leavers. The two-year youth training scheme will cost £1·1 billion. I am sure that the hon. Member for Huddersfield would agree that, although he criticised the lack of spending, it is right that public money should be used to pump-prime private money. I hope that the will not say that the current lack of spending on training in British industry should be filled purely by Government money. I am sure that he will agree that British industry should pay more for training. Therefore, it is right that, when we use Government money, we should use it to stimulate private companies to spend more. That is precisely what the new two-year youth training scheme will be doing.

Young people going on the youth training scheme, having read all the advertisements, will have high expectations. They are now all expecting to be threatening Japanese industries. I have no doubt that in a few years Tracy and all the others featured in those advertisements will be building television sets and stereos and selling them to Japan rather than having them all come the other way.

I have every confidence that those high expectations will be filled by the youth training scheme. But the minority of those young persons who come off the youth training scheme — although in some pockets of high unemployment it may not be a minority — will have their hopes dashed. It is impossible for the Government to guarantee a job for every youth training scheme trainee, but we must offer them something. There must be a guarantee that they will be allowed to continue their development.

The second priority is the long-term unemployed. They are the people who have had no chance of a high-quality training scheme; people aged between 18 and 25 who left school at the height of the recession who never had the chance of a job, or people who have had a job for only a short time. They do not have any decent training and now they find themselves becoming longer and longer unemployed because employers are increasingly taking on people who have been through the youth training scheme. Therefore, that limits the vacancies available for people who have not had the benefit of that scheme.

Another problem for people in that category is that employers will look for people who have either had training or had some experience. They will therefore go for older people and that group of people will spend longer and longer unemployed and it will be harder and harder for them to get a job.

The Government have various schemes which will help, such as the community programme, the new counselling initiative and various retraining measures. It is right that such schemes should be provided and they are proving effective. But not only must we counsel for retraining, because we are always looking to fill vacancies such as the one which will soon be appearing in the west end for a director of a graphics company, but we must also look to counselling to fill other needs in the community, not necessarily within the established employment market.

To meet the needs of the post-youth training scheme unemployed and the long-term unemployed, we need greater imagination. This is where I come to the subject under discussion today. We need some form of national community service. The armed forces will have a role to play in that. We need greater imagination to mop up those young people who are not on a community programme or an existing Government or industry — structured retraining scheme in order to give them some hope for continued personal development and to stop the sheer waste of human resources in Britain.

Before we can embark on any such scheme, we need to approach the problem from the point of view of the Department of Health and Social Services. As long as young people are told that they have to be available for work we shall be extremely limited in our scope of providing community places for them. We must end the ridiculous anomaly of, for example, the 21-hour rule. It is in no way incompatible that young people should work full time on a community or armed forces scheme and at the same time be deemed available for work. The vast

majority of young people want a job and the moment that they have a chance of one they will take it. Therefore, in the meantime we must allow them, rather than hang around the streets or watch videos all day, to be able to improve their position and increase their chances of getting a job.

The elements of such a scheme must be, first, that it should not be compulsory. To introduce a compulsory scheme takes away the very benefits of having a national community scheme. We want young people who are motivated to help the community, and for them and the community to get the most out of it they must not be forced to go on the scheme. The Thompson report on the youth services said:

"Coercing or compelling young people to take part would defeat the primary purpose and benefit of young people's involvement in the community."

That is right.

Secondly, young people should have the chance to shape the project in which they get involved so that they are involved from the very start. They should be allowed to take the initiative and to respond to local needs, where those are identified, or to identify them for themselves.

There should be clear aims so that young people have a target in sight which is easily achievable. There can be nothing more frustrating than taking part in a scheme where nothing appears to have been done at the end, either for oneself or for the community. Therefore, I favour initially looking at three-month projects. There should be short projects, with which young people can get involved in a community or the armed forces or wherever, with a limited aim which is achievable and which enables people to get most out of them. That would also allow people who are unemployed for longer to take up more than one such module.

Young people must be allowed to participate in the running of the schemes. They should not be used as cheap labour for job substitution. Apart from the damage that that may do to young people, it would not do a lot of good for local economies if local building work, which could be done and paid for in the proper way, was done by young people simply because the sponsoring agency wanted to get the work done on the cheap. In exploring those community provisions, we must look at what young people get out of them.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My hon. Friend spoke about construction projects being done on the cheap and disadvantaging construction firms in the private sector, with which I agree. Does he agree that there are a number of schemes which would be of great social value, whether it be the refurbishment of village halls or other types of construction projects, where there is no realistic prospect of them being done on a commercial basis, and where it would be of benefit if they were done through the community programme or similar schemes?

Mr. Lawler: I agree with my hon. Friend. The distinction must be between work that could or would be done and work that would not be done, either because finance is not available or simply because it is a scheme for betterment that would not be considered through the normal channels. The same applies to the existing community programme.

Many sectors and agencies have a part to play in community service and we must seek to use them all. There is a great variety of work to be done and I shall broadly separate it into four categories. There is all the environmental work, whether it be village halls, improving inner city sites, or derelict areas. There is much community work to be done such as help for old people, the under-privileged and the handicapped, which is not simply confined to inner city areas but can be found in rural areas. There are many social and community needs in rural areas which could be satisfied by involvement with young people. To explore those needs and discover how they can be provided for by young people on a community service scheme, we need the co-operation of local authorities, voluntary organisations, conservation groups, charities, and social services departments.

There is a strong role for employers and education. I do not detract from the provision they make for adult and youth training, but there is undoubtedly greater scope for further training. Work experience and community provision is a good thing and provides training in a certain way but there is certainly a need for young people, particularly those who have been on the youth training scheme, to continue to develop their training. Otherwise, the training will be wasted, and we cannot allow that to happen.

Mr. Sheerman: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that job experience, community service and training are important but that the item which has not been mentioned enough in the debate is the fact that there have to be jobs at the end. If we had had a proper Budget for jobs which put money into the economy to get jobs going, young people would have had a rosier future.

Mr. Lawler: I feel that schemes such as YTS, training through a community programme and the other schemes I am elaborating on help to create jobs. There is no way that the Government create jobs. Those schemes create jobs by helping British industry to be more innovative, they get rid of the shortages of skills and encourage people to use their skills and go on to form their own businesses and become self-employed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not touch too much on self-employment. It has been with some difficulty that the Chair has interpreted the terms of the motion to allow some latitude, and I think that we are stretching it when we start to talk about self-employment.

Mr. Lawler: As I am attempting to show, there are competing schemes for resources which would otherwise be devoted to our national service scheme. I promise you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I shall not dwell at length on self-employment.

Many human resources and a great deal of technical resources are being wasted at the moment. I should like to see all our universities, colleges, schools, and industrial training centres opened in the evenings and weekends during vacations because in them there is equipment worth millions of pounds—nearly all paid for by public money—which is lying idle. Unemployed young people should be able to make use of that equipment to improve themselves.

The Army and the police are other important elements in providing opportunities within this scheme. Some young people might wish to work in the community or retrain themselves using equipment which is already

[Mr. Lawler]

available, but many of them would benefit from participating in a scheme sponsored by the Army, the police or other emergency services.

The other sponsoring agencies which should be involved are the chambers of commerce, enterprise agencies and other self-employment schemes, many of which already exist, such as Live Wire and Instant Muscle. They do tremendous work in encouraging young people to become self-employed.

Finance is the crucial element. There is limited finance available from the Government, although they have devoted huge resources to youth training and youth matters. However, much money is being spent in this area which could be better spent. There are numerous agencies involved in providing for unemployed young people. In most cities and rural areas throughout the country one will find drop-in centres and unemployment centres which are all funded, but in a very haphazard and unco-ordinated way. We must rationalise that spending and target it so that it benefits young people more effectively.

The community programme, an excellent scheme, could be used to provide supervisors on national community service and also cover the marginal costs of the overheads of opening up a school or an ITEC centre at the weekends or in the evenings and allow them to be used by unemployed people. It could also be used to provide any extra spending which would be necessary to pay for specialist tuition. Charities, voluntary organisations and industry through, for example, existing schemes such as the Kodak conservation scheme would all provide financing and input to a national community service scheme.

I believe that young people would respond to the setting up of such a scheme because it will provide a means for those who have not been lucky enough to secure employment and those who have been on YTS and still not been able to find a job, by which they can continue with their development. Having just been taught by the youth training scheme how to climb the ladder, it will prevent them from falling off it. I hope that the Government will set up a committee to review the piecemeal and unco-ordinated provisions which apparently exist, get rid of the duplicated resource provision and introduce a co-ordinated national community scheme for unemployed young people to participate in voluntarily. It could provide scope for further training within the community and work provision, increase access to groups to existing training schemes and facilities and make more effective use of existing resources, to promote the involvement of community and environmental projects amd assist and encourage young people to become self-employed.

All that would be on an unpaid and voluntary basis. I believe that young people will come forward as long as they are allowed to retain their benefit and, by so doing, spend their time in a more constructive way than would otherwise be available to them. I hope that that will be established on a national basis without having to wait too long.

There is a great variety of training and a great deal of work to be done. We must allow each young person to find what will be of most benefit to him, because whatever is of most benefit to him will be of most benefit to the community in the long run.

I disagree with one or two points made earlier in the debate. Hon. Members said that money for an expanded national service scheme should come from the Manpower Services Commission. Recent reports have identified that 80 per cent. of people in small firms receive no training and 15 per cent. of companies are complaining that their production is being limited through skill shortages. While that is happening, the MSC must have all the resources that it now has at its disposal, to ensure that adequate training is provided for young people, and retraining is provided for adults. Although a national service scheme would have a valuable role to play, resources should not be diverted from the MSC to pay for it. There is nothing more valuable for our economy and British industry than a properly-provided, resourced and staffed on-the-job training scheme such as the YTS primarily is.

In times of limited resources, we must have cost-effectiveness. There is nothing more cost-effective than a voluntary national community service scheme. Young people do not need to be drilled round a parade ground to get discipline, because they will get discipline from being involved in the community, and from contributing and achieving something. That will give them all the discipline that they need to make sure that they play their part as full citizens, as they grow into their adult years.

Therefore, we want a national community service scheme. We want means for unemployed young people to develop themselves and their potential so that they are not wasted. We want a scheme that matches up work that desperately needs to be done in the community with the human resources that are available, as well as with the technical resources. We should open up and make full use of those resources. It is a scandal that the available resources are going to waste. For probably more than half the year, equipment and resources are not used. The Government should launch a committee to look at that in a highly imaginative way and come to the House with a scheme for national community service.

12.31 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I welcome the opportunity to take part in the debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) on introducing this subject, particularly as I did my national service in the 1950s, and have been a member of the Territorial Army reserve for five or six years.

There has been some interest in the Chamber this morning in the position of the Labour Front Bench. I was interested in the way in which the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) ranged widely around the topic before finally having to admit that there was no way in which his party was prepared to support any commitment on behalf of the armed services towards helping our young people. He made that clear.

Mr. Sheerman: The hon. Gentleman knows that that was not the point that I made. I said that we would not be committed to national service that included a military element in the use of the armed services. Using the armed services for providing skills training for our young people is a possibility under a Labour Government.

Mr. Thompson: I still disagree with the policy that the hon. Gentleman is propounding. He misses the whole point of the debate.

There has been much talk since the Budget about the right fiscal approach to reducing unemployment.

However, the question is how we tackle the revolution that is taking place in work and leisure, particularly as it affects young people. Therefore, it is right that this morning we should have this debate on voluntary national service youth training and the reserve forces because it focuses on the needs of people, particularly young people. That point was emphasised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler). I wholeheartedly supported his comments along those lines.

We can relate those needs to policy decisions in areas such as defence and, indeed, social services and improving our infrastruture. I have for a long time been in favour of the concept of voluntary national service. I hope very much that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary will take seriously the proposals of my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham and other hon. Members. The Government must take the matter seriously. They must take it on board and not just say that it has been an interesting debate, and now they can move on to something else. Serious issues are at stake.

For example, the concept of voluntary national service could be applied to a whole range of activities—the armed services that we are debating this morning, the police, the fire service, nursing, social services and so on. However, rightly, in the debate we are concentrating mainly on the opportunity in the armed services for young people and volunteers. I supported the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), when he emphasised that all three services should be involved. On that point, I may disagree slightly with my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham.

I was also astonished by the remarks of the Labour spokesman, the hon. Member for Huddersfield, when he tried to say that a voluntary scheme was compulsory. I hope that it is clear from the debate that all of us have been talking about a voluntary scheme, with perhaps one or two exceptions, including my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), who advocates a return to conscription. However, the motion is clearly about a voluntary scheme.

I shall not comment on the details of any scheme because they were set out clearly in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham. However, I reinforce the support for the youth training scheme in the armed services. I hope that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary will do more, with his colleagues, to promote the scheme and make it more successful.

I also wish to speak out strongly in favour of the concept of national and community service, an ideal that has been referred to in many speeches. It has been debated ever since the abolition of national service in the years between 1957 and 1960. Indeed it was John Grigg who said that the greatest mistake made by the then Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, now the Earl of Stockton, was just that. Many other commentators also said that. However, we cannot put the clock back.

Today, there are strains in society because of rapid change. There are changes in the structure of society, the nature of employment and, particularly, in the role of education and training. Therefore, there is a need for policies, action and ideas to promote community spirit and a sense of identity and purpose, particularly among our young people. As has been stated, some of those young people are in danger of alienation from society. I should like to emphasise that.

In my experience, in commerce, industry and education, that spirit is all too often lacking. I have spoken in education debates, and I do not wish to raise that subject today, but there is no doubt that the morale and spirit in education is not all that it should be. That is also true, of course, in industry and commerce. The situation is not helped by the increasing politicisation of our universities and schools. Again, I could speak about that at some length.

The needs of 17-year-olds are not always fully met by our schools, universities and colleges. Although I fully support the youth training scheme, young people's needs are not fully met by that either. If they were, we would not be seeing increasing drug abuse and increasing crime among the young, along with many of our other inner city problems. Politicians, educators and the churches have failed to cure that sickness in our society despite all their pamphlets. Those of us who did our national service know that the experience was not necessarily valued by all, and sometimes hampered an individual's development. But for the overwhelming majority, national service represented a unique and valuable opportunity to widen one's experience and develop one's character. I believe that there is a lesson to be learnt from that.

Many of us who did our national service were imbued with a sense that we owed a duty to the community that stood over and above our duty to develop our talents to the full. In what is generally regarded as a selfish and materialistic society there is an urgent need to swing the pendulum towards self-discipline, courtesy and loyalty. What have the armed services got to offer? I believe that their traditions and ethos admirably suit them for any task that involves helping young people with their training and development.

Perhaps the defence establishment could be persuaded to agree that it has a role to perform that goes further than the mere provision of sophisticated equipment or of skilled regular personnel for our country's defence. The services can share with some of our young people the tradition of service, comradeship and leadership that so impressed my generation of national servicemen. Officers know their men well and that, together with the way in which they treat them, provides an example that could be applied throughout society. A recent pamphlet about the Falklands war discussed the distinction to be drawn between the Argentinian officers and ours. It was clearly pointed out that our traditions of leadership were largely responsible for our superiority in that conflict. That is why I support the extension of our reserve forces and the idea of voluntary youth training with an armed services input.

I also support those of my colleagues who have spoken about civil defence. It is vital that the Government should take that subject more seriously. I see a link between what we have said about the reserve forces and youth training, and civil defence. I do not just see civil defence as preparing for a possible conflict. I regularly speak for the concept of emergency volunteers who could intervene in any other civil emergency. But the Government have not taken up such ideas anywhere near as enthusiastically as they should have done. This country could gain tremendously from pursuing that course.

The arguments for compulsory conscription are probably overwhelmed by the realities of the situation, and so that is probably not on. But there would be a spin-off from more contact between the armed services and our young people. As has been said, there must be more

[Mr. Thompson]

understanding between civilian society and our armed services. I believe that the risk of isolation is increasing. My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham said that as the tolerance of violence in society increased, so the tolerance of the concept of the necessity for the use of force by society decreased. I shall not start a philosophical debate on that, but there should be a better understanding of our armed services and their role. The Ministry of Defence must bear that in mind. It is not good enough for it to say that it has a marvellous force that can do everything, while forgetting about the rest of society and its attitude to the services. I cannot stress that point strongly enough.

Let us therefore use, in any practical and realistic way, the fine traditions of our regular forces. Let us use and exploit the desire for adventure and service among our young people. I do not accept the depressing view of others that volunteers will not come forward or that the youth training scheme has not worked well. If the package is sold properly, plenty of volunteers will come forward for the scheme of my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham, or for any other scheme. It is chicken-hearted just to say that such a scheme is not on. The problems of our country are far too serious to be dismissed like that. Let us tackle those matters by considering the needs of the people and the country first, especially the needs of our young people.

12.44 pm

Mr. Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): I join hon. Members in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) on bringing this subject before the House. I am delighted to see that he is properly dressed and is wearing his Parachute Regiment tie. That leads us to believe that he would "target the area" properly. That is exactly what he has done, and I intend to follow his line and concentrate on the points that he made.

Before I do so, may I comment on the contribution of the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman). He ducked and weaved actively and broadened the scope of the debate by talking about the role of this and that, and who could help where, but he did not accept that, at some time, everyone should acknowledge a need to serve the nation, not just to serve oneself. That concept is not foreign, even in Socialist countries. Austria, Sweden and many Socialist countries accept national service and see nothing dishonourable in serving one's country. It is a sad reflection on the present Labour party that that central theme was missing from the hon. Gentleman's speech, and it was reinforced by his clear commitment to remove the youth training scheme already in place. It has imperfections and it could be improved, but it has given excellent training to thousands.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement mentioned the increase in our reserve forces and gave us an impressive array of figures to show, just how they had been expanded. But, against the background of Brave Defender, will the expansion of the reserve forces bridge not the gap, but the gulf that exists between resources and requirements? If it can be shown that that is not happening, when will the Government take further action to bridge that gulf? Will they bring their proposals before the house at the earliest possible opportunity?

Nothing changes much in life. The British people have always believed that national service was good for the vast majority of young people who took part in it, and that view is still supported by public opinion today. The hon. Member for Huddersfield said that 80 per cent. of people asked in a survey agreed that some form of national service was very acceptable.

However, there is the widely held opposite view—the alleged view of those in the services—that national service is bad for the armed forces. I speak with 13 years' experience of the Army. When we had national service, the vast majority of men in my battalion were doing their national service. They formed the backbone of the battalion and went into the specialist skills areas. Without them, we would not have operated as effectively as we did in Suez, Cyprus, and other parts of the world. Those who decry the role of national service are making a grave mistake and are misleading people.

The pundits will say that four months' training is not enough. Indeed, that point was echoed by my hon. Friend the Minister. But there is a misunderstanding of what we should try to achieve in those four months. We shall not try to impart skills—to turn people into lathe operators or motor mechanics. It would be a basic operation. I joined the Army when I was 16, and I remember only too well my first four months there. The first six weeks were spent in general training corps. Everyone spent six weeks in that corps and then spent 10 weeks "up the hill" receiving specialist corps training. I do not say that at the end of the four months we possessed all weapon skills, but at least we were totally different from the reserves who had joined up four months before. We had a basic sense of identity and a belief in ourselves. We had learnt about others and, in my view, we were much better members of society than when we had started out on the road into the Army. I believe that that is the road down which my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham would like us to start today.

Army training was an excellent base, but it did not provide civilian skills, and that is not the proposal that is before us. I am worried about the youth training scheme, which has been described in many quarters as a failure as a result of the armed services not wishing to play their full part in it. However, that is not true of some arms and services. As my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham would expect me to do, I shall take the Parachute Regiment as my example. In 1984, the regiment took in 80 youngsters through the YTS and 75 per cent. of them completed their year's training, with 27 of them staying on in the Regular Army. Of the others—I was present when they passed out—they went out better than when they went in. Most of them went out into good jobs because employers were looking for the qualities that had been brought out in them during their year's training.

My worry about the YTS is that in 1985 the number of young people coming forward for training in the Parachute Regiment had fallen to 35. There is something amiss and I hope that the MOD will conduct an investigation to ascertain why there was such a dramatic falling off between 1984 and 1985 at a time when youth unemployment was supposedly on the rise.

The problem of pay still exists. There is a vast differential between those who are in regular service and those who are on the short-term YTS. However, the benefits that flow from the scheme are immeasurable. First, there is the art of living. I return to what I said about the four months of training that was received by those who

did national service and the training that was received during war time. Those who received that training learnt to live and work together and to grow up, and they are all better for it.

The second benefit is discipline. I know that "discipline" is often regarded as a dirty word but there is a lack of it among some of our young people. I take up the remarks of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport, (Dr. Owen), who said that discipline would be a tremendous help to some of our more deprived young people. The right hon. Gentleman argued that they would benefit immensely from it, and he is right.

The third benefit is education. When I went to Aldershot to watch the passing out of those who had received training in the Parachute Regiment as YTS volunteers, the two people who impressed me most of all were those who worked in the education service. They told me that they thought that they had the most rewarding job in the services. On day one they took on board 80 youngsters with only four or five CSEs between them, and at the end of the year they were turning them out with three of four O-levels each. Education is an area that we have not considered closely enough and there are many benefits that could flow from that. Within four months I would expect to see basic education and motivation built in as a major part in a young person's training. If youngsters came out of the services after four months with the right sort of report, that, in itself would be a recommendation to many employers, who would recognise that there was a base on which to build some further skills.

Fourthly, there is no doubt that our Territorial Army, good though it is, does not have enough people within it with a service background. Four months' training in the services would provide a valuable reserve, and I would hope that many who received it would go on to see service in the reserve forces.

Time presses. I sum up with an old adage — the difficult we do at once, the impossible may take a little longer. I believe that these proposals are difficult. It seems that Government Front Bench spokesmen believe them to be impossible. I hope that they will reconsider and see whether it is not possible to achieve the impossible.

12.55 pm

Sir Philip Goodhart: With the leave of the House, I thank hon. Members who have made the debate so interesting, and I commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note with approval of the Government's plans to expand the United Kingdom's volunteer reserve forces; and emphasises the great value to young people of basic service training, while recognising that such training should not be funded in a way which would diminish the United Kingdom's front line capability.

High Technology (European Co-operation)

12.56 pm

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): I beg to move,

That this House strongly supports the policies pursued by Her Majesty's Government in European collaboration in research and development in high technology industries, including through Esprit and Eureka, and in addition wishes to see these industries further develop joint manufacturing and marketing projects.

I wish to draw attention to some matters that I find encouraging and others that give me cause for concern. I hope that the encouraging items show the way in which some of the problems can be tackled. In the development of new ideas and in the making of new scientific discoveries, Britain's record in this century is one which any other country would find difficult to match. However, it has been repeatedly stated that in translating that scientific invention into profitable and practical use we have lagged behind.

When Great Britain was in the happy position of being able to sell its manufactured goods to an empire, the impact of international competition was weakened and we could rely upon a market of immense size. That no longer applies.

Although the costs of manufacturing goods may be falling with increased automation and mechanisation, the costs of developing new aircraft, new computer sytems and even new motor cars steadily increase. To fund the investment needed and to obtain a profitable return requires large sales and a large market.

In general, European companies and countries have not been particularly successful in looking beyond their national boundaries. The pursuit of jointly funded projects has been the exception rather than the rule. There has been no particular wish to buy European. The British are slightly inclined to buy British, but the French are more positively inclined to buy French. If no attractive home product is available the average European purchaser is at least as ready to buy Japanese or American as to buy from another European manufacturer. Perhaps that is sensible, but the consequence of a fragmented Europen market is to reduce the sales volumes of individual European manufacturers and thus to deny those manufacturers the funds for the further investment that they need.

About 20 years ago I naively assumed that the EEC would lead to a truly common market, that within a relatively short period the barriers to trade which then existed would be substantially removed. Although some progress has been made it has been disappointingly slow. Even some of the important initiatives that have been taken are all too easily clogged up with bureaucratic decision-making. In high technology projects a delay of even a few months can turn a profitable project into a financial disaster.

In two areas European co-operation has been encouraging and the benefits have still to be fully realised. One is in the development of information technology and the other is in the design, development and manufacture of major aerospace projects. In information technology the EEC's funding of the Esprit and Eureka projects are proving to be an important stimulus to development effort. Esprit is, of course, related specifically to information technology projects. On a European basis it is an extension of the aims and objectives of the well-established Alvey programme.

[Mr. Timothy Wood]

The European Commission identified five priority areas of information technology that justify Community effort. They are advanced micro-electronic capability, software technology, advanced information processing, office systems, and computer-integrated manufacture. The Commission also proposed bringing the 12 major European information technology companies, including International Computers Ltd, GEC and Plessey from the United Kingdom, together with universities and other research centres. It has certainly been good to see those companies from different European countries co-operating more steadily together, as well as competing, where appropriate.

The Alvey project has proved to be an important stimulus in bringing together those companies and academic institutions in major research projects in Britain. There are encouraging signs that Esprit is acting as a catalyst for greater co-operation and dialogue between the European high technology companies. Although the Esprit programme is an important catalyst for joint European competitive collaboration between companies, it is naive to suppose that that in itself will enable European companies to compete effectively in the long term.

There is a need to progress further in collaboration on product development, manufacture and marketing. Inevitably, there must be major reservations about how programmes, such as Alvey and Esprit, can respond swiftly and flexibly to encompass the rapid changes that may be perceived in the development of new projects.

When I worked for ICL, on one or two occasions I was involved in putting forward development projects to the Department of Trade and Industry for support. The Government officials examining the project were extremely helpful and constructive in their approach. Nevertheless, by the time that the proposal was sufficiently well formulated to merit support, a substantial amount of work had already been carried out. Furthermore, the nature of such projects is that significant changes may need to be made to them and considerable time may have to be spent on justifying them to those responsible for financial support.

Overall, although one is providing that catalytic help to companies, they often have to spend considerable resources and time, presenting the case for a particular project and considering the case and the possibility whether the Government will believe that the proposed changes can be justified financially. Those factors often act as a slight hindrance, although the end result may be financial support.

The House of Lords Select Committee on European Communities considered Esprit in its eighth report last Session. I agree with its main conclusions, and although I have already touched on most of them, they are worth re-emphasising. Pre-competitive collaboration should be a precursor to collaboration on product development and manufacture. There need to be many more effective moves to create a true common market with the reduction of differing standards, and of border delays and restraints on trade and services. There is also a great need to ensure that a sufficient number of people are properly qualified to exploit the new technologies.

I have often spoken of my concern about the amount of higher education and training that we provide, and I certainly do not wish to expand unduly on that aspect now. I wish to concentrate on how we can further expand upon co-operation between countries and companies, rather than on the more basic requirements of education and training.

Eureka was clearly stimulated by a wish on the part of the British Government to have a European high technology counterpart to the United States' strategic defence initiative. There is no doubt that many high technology companies believe that the United States space programme gave a major uplift to the development of a multitude of new projects, which will have a much wider application than the space programme. It is arguable as to whether research directed to more terrestrial activities would produce the same beneficial effects. However, it is clear that many companies involved in innovative projects believe that the setting of clear national or supernational goals for exciting projects can act as a major fillip to progress.

At the moment, the Eureka initiative is leading to attempts to resolve some of the problems identified as a result of the experience of work on Esprit. There is a major need to open up the European markets in sectors such as standards and public purchasing, and I welcome the efforts made by my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Trade and Industry to make progress in this regard. However, I wonder whether it might have been possible to indentify exciting projects in medicine or communications, for example, where a major European drive could have been attempted and where one might have tried to excite popular imagination on specific projects that might be pursued. There is an opportunity to do such things, and if it is taken up, we might find in this country, as in the United States, that the necessary stimulus has been created.

The European collaboration in aerospece activities has advanced much further than in other sectors. Im my Stevenage constituency, over 8,500 people are employed by British Aerospace. I am delighted that such successful progress is being made in so many collaborative projects. Undoubtedly, the more concerted approach to European purchasing of defence equipment is having a beneficial effect, but that is not the whole story. Aerospace manufacturers have learned that while competing on some projects they can successfully collaborate on others, and that it is not necessary to have a large monolithic organisation to produce major new systems.

Airbus Industrie is a strikingly important example of a European response to the impact of large American aircraft manufacturers in general, and Boeing in particular. With the A300 and A310 having proved themselves in service with many airlines, the orders for the A320, standing at over 100, are well ahead of what many supporters of the project, like myself, dared to hope would be reached at this stage. The clear intent of Airbus Industrie to go ahead with the A330 and the A340 aircraft highlights the prospect of a European range of aircraft that meets the needs of many of the world's airlines. The British Aerospace involvement in the design and production of the wings of this aircraft is a most significant aspect of British involvement. However, there are a multitude of other contractors and sub-contractors making their contribution as well.

I have noticed that there has been a certain amount of speculation about the funding of British Aerospace's involvement in the A330 and the A340 development. The Government support for the A320 programme was clearly of vital importance. However, I believe that at present,

apart from possible recycling or rescheduling of that finance, it should not be necessary for there to be further British Government support. British Aerospace has demonstrated to financial institutions that it is becoming a much more successful and popular company. That positive picture will, I hope, be reflected in a desire by investors to support this and other investment opportunities that British Aerospace presents.

Turning away from Airbus Industrie, one looks at some of the other aerospace projects which are also most significant. The Tornado aircraft and the European fighter project are other examples of European collaboration. But collaboration is not related solely to aircraft. The development and production of missiles for such systems as ASRAAM and Milan are extremely significant from the point of view of my constituency. There is also a range of collaborative ventures in space and communications development. A whole series of satellite and related systems are being developed in collaborative projects for use both on the Ariane launches and on the United States space shuttles. After last week's encounter with Halley's comet, it is perhaps worth singling out the success of the Giotto project. But most projects are, of course, associated with potentially profitable and useful satellite communications activities.

I could spend a great deal of time eulogising about the multitude of important projects that are being pursued by British Aerospace, many of them in my constituency, but I want to consider further whether there are lessons to be learned from European co-operation in aerospace which should be pursued in other areas of endeavour, in particular in information technology. I believe that a great deal can be achieved but that even now our opportunities are becoming more limited unless Governments and companies move much more rapidly than they have done.

Twenty-five years ago, in computer development, one had in this country several manufacturers producing mainframe computers. They included ICT, Ferranti, Elliott Automation, English Electric and EMI. By a series of mergers of computer interests, those manufacturers were reduced to one — ICL. At the same time, the physically large and slow machines of those days have either become enormously more powerful or have been superseded by desktop machines which are also more powerful, faster and easier to use.

For the small business and home computer market, a whole series of new companies has sprung up and, in many instances, faded away once more. Companies like Acorn, despite the success of its BBC microcomputer, and Sinclair, despite its innovative approach, have found the going much tougher than at one stage they anticipated. Even the United States company, Commodore, at one stage the producer of the most popular home computers, has suffered severely.

While much attention has been devoted to the varying fortunes of the microcomputer manufacturers, the manufacturers of large computer systems have had their own challenges to face. For the past 30 years the world computer industry has been dominated by IBM at least as significantly as Boeing has dominated the aircraft industry.

The huge world market which has been achieved by IBM has meant that that company has been able to devote enormous resources to further research and development. Nevertheless, it has proved possible for other companies —sometimes quite small companies—to develop items varying from processor chips to highly effective printers to floppy disk systems. It is not the case that only if one is very big is the world beautiful.

However, the development of complex systems and software requires considerable resources, and the effective marketing of these systems, together with proper support, after those systems have been sold and installed requires great resources too. ICL, Bull of France and Siemens of Germany, have set up a research centre of technological excellence in Munich. I hope that it will prove to be the small beginning of major efforts to produce larger computer systems and computer networks on a European rather than a national basis.

Large computer systems seem to me to lend themselves at least as easily as aircraft to the development and production of varying parts by different companies in different countries. In a typical computer system one would have not merely the computer processor; one would have various memory systems for direct access memory, or disk drives, or magnetic tape drives. One would also have varying types of printers, display equipment and so on. A considerable variety of components could be developed by different companies if they collaborated more.

A company may first consider whether it is sensible for it to produce a certain item. If it is not, the company looks at the world scene and perhaps picks up one component from Japan, another from the United States, and so on. That may be sensible in the short term but, by acting in that way, the company is eroding its potential markets.

In the end, the potential market is one of the crucial aspects of success in high technology. A company that does not co-operate with other manufacturers will not create a large market. Many high technology industries will fail if they do not create such a market. The lesson to be learned from aerospace is that the various European aerospace companies have got together, resulting in them being able to market jointly their various products and thus win greater confidence from potential purchasers of their products. In turn, this means that, in 10, 15 or 20 years, they will have more resources for research and development.

How do we best advance this cause? I am not one of those who believe that companies and industries should be led by Governments. It is up to companies to ascertain the ways in which various projects can be pursued together. However, Governments have a role—first, in providing the catalyst in terms of, for example, the Alvey programme, Esprit and, potentially Eureka and, secondly, in creating an environment in which Government purchasing in different countries is co-ordinated. Co-ordination would mean that the French would not look for a French manufacturer and then look at the world scene, that the Germans would not look for a German manufacturer and then at the world scene, and so on.

It has been said that ICL's market has been excessively protected in terms of sales to the Government. In some respects, that is true, but it has not been protected in terms of the European market. I do not want protection. I should like co-ordination in the way in which we organise our affairs in Europe so that we can create the base to enable our companies to succeed.

Similar considerations apply to aerospace and information technology. They may apply in the longer term to the nuclear power industry, motor manufacturing, and so on. Where there is a need to spend large sums on

[Mr. Timothy Wood]

research and development and on support for the consumer after he has acquired equipment, it is a function of Governments in support of industry, to ensure that the potential is fulfilled.

I hope the House will see that the points I have made are valid and that there is a strong case for reinforcing co-operation on high technology initiatives, and for reinforcing the work in aerospace and in information technology. If we do that, we can become within Europe a highly successful and continuing base for the manufacture of high technology goods. I hope that we will not be reduced to a tourist centre and a place where people come to see what was once the base of an empire but is no longer.

1.21 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry, North-West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood) on initiating this debate. He may have caused more embarrassment to his Government than was the intention when his motion was originally tabled, because it comes hard on the heels of obvious anti-European initiatives against industries that are of key importance to high technology. It comes at a time when we are selling out our helicopter industry to Sikorsky. In that case we barely looked at, and then turned down, a European alternative. It also comes when the Government have embarked on a hell-bent course to sell off Land Rover.

I mildly rebuke the hon. Member for Stevenage for saying that even motor cars cost a lot to develop these days. They always did, but they cost more than ever now because they are at the forefront of the advanced technologies about which he was speaking from his own experience in software and computers and their application in the main areas of the Esprit programme. Motor cars, including Land Rovers, are at the forefront of those applications and to a large extent the health and strength of our advanced technology industries depend on the health, strength and size of our motor car industry. That is why the Opposition were against the Government's proposals to sell off with meaningless undertakings first our helicopter industry to Sikorsky and now, irrespective of the merits of the case, our own vital motor car and truck industry to General Motors.

With considerable help from Tory Back Benchers, we managed for a while to fight back the Government's intention to sell Austin Rover, and all the success it has achieved, to Ford. Far from promoting national and pan-European solutions to our problems, the Government have given up on British management and technology and have turned their back on co-operation with Europe. They are intent on cutting their own expenditure by selling out to the Americans.

Mr. Wood: One of the crucial points I endeavoured to make in my speech was the importance of a large market. If one finds that, for various reasons, a market has diminished, there is no point in wishful thinking about the maintenance of a specific manufacturer. One has to build confidence in a market for the goods being produced, and that must be done by combined development projects and by good after-sales service. Once one has got that market one is in a good position, but there is no point in crying once the market has been lost.

Mr. Robinson: I do not see the relevance of that intervention to the point I was making. I agree there is no point in crying over a lost market. One has to do something about it. One must get back that market share and that is what every other country and every other industry is doing. It is a diversion from the main topic of today's debate, but it is interesting to note something I have not heard said on either side of the House, that Renault, the enormous state-owned French car and truck producer, has made losses in the last few years of £1 billion a year. We hear no debates about the French Government flogging off Renault in part or in whole. As a whole, it is making those losses irrespective of any changes in the management of the company.

We can blame the French Government of Mr. Mitterrand for many things, but we cannot blame him for the running of Renault because he has no direct responsibility for it. It was nationalised by none other than General de Gaulle, as hon. Members on the Government side will know. It has remained nationalised and has been run by a succession of distinguished French industrialists. Whatever we may think of President Mitterrand, he has no responsibility for the performance of Renault. The French see the strategic importance of that as they do of Esprit and the other programmes that we must consider today.

I noticed one surprising point in the speech of the hon. Member for Stevenage. I do not know how it will be received by his constituents. He said, if I understood him correctly—I am sure he will take every opportunity to correct me if I am wrong—that he did not think that British Aerospace needed Government support for its share in the development of the wing structure for the new Airbus. He is being quite quixotic in making that remark.

In my experience, dating back to the early 1960s, I know of no aerospace project of that magnitude that has not involved Government funding in some form or another. One can go back to Rolls-Royce and its unfortunate collapse and the humiliation of receivership that it experienced which the Conservative Government then—they may regret it now—forced the company to go through; to the invention of launch aid, a brilliantly innovative concept from the Department of Trade and Industry; and to all the programmes, civilian and defence. They have always needed Government aid, and we must say again, as we did at the last trade and industry Question Time, that it is not enough for the Secretary of State to list a formidable series of barriers and obstacles for the company to overcome and to refuse to give me an explicit undertaking that aid, even in principle, was not ruled out. We are asking for no more than that.

Anyone can sit back and say that the company must be profitable and that the money must come from somewhere else. In all, he rattled off about five obstacles to any Government funding. The harsh reality is that at the end of the day, the Government will have to back the project, and the earlier that that is made plain, and the earlier that the Government come in and support British Aerospace, the better will be the deal that we shall get out of that aspect of European co-operation on the new technologies.

Mr. Wood: British Aerospace has not as yet made an application for aid. My understanding is that it is still considering what its requirements, if any, might be. The point that I was trying to emphasise was that, in view of

the major successes that British Aerospace has been having, I see good prospects of further funding being available from the private sector.

Mr. Robinson: Nobody is putting that in doubt. That is not the issue. I am sure that the directors and management of British Aerospace will vigorously pursue every avenue of private finance. The hon. Gentleman is missing the point. What he ought to be doing, if he were doing his job as a constituency Member of Parliament, is joining Labour Members in pointing out to the Government the obvious fact that they will have to support the project. We shall see. If it does not come in that project it will come in some other, but I guarantee there will be government funding, directly or indirectly, behind that project. The Minister shakes his head. I hope that in the coming months I shall reflect with wry amusement on the fact that on this particular issue he has not been correct. Money will be needed. It will be found, directly or indirectly, and I hope that that European area of collaboration will proceed.

We are discussing today the question of European co-operation in advanced technologies against a background of continuing decline. That has accelerated considerably under the Government, but it has been there since the war. Historians and economists trace it back to the 19th century. I am never clear what good it does for us to carry out that form of industrial analysis, which relates our problems to a cultural difficulty, other than that it focuses Government policies on what we should be doing now, which those who look that far back may often fail to do. If I could do that today it would be by merely establishing yet again how great the need is.

There was a debate in the other place in which it was pointed out, and it is worth pointing out again today, just how far Europe and the United Kingdom are behind. If we look at the production of main frame computers, integrated circuitry, and video recorders the figures are alarming. The market for large industrial computers is dominated by the United States with Japan catching up. But eight out of 10 personal computers sold in Europe are made in the United States. Nine of of 10 video recorders sold here are made in Japan. European manufacturers of integrated circuits control only 30 per cent. of our market—that is the Community market—and 13 per cent. of world sales.

It is a long time since Babbage first developed the concept of the computer way back in the 1920s. During the war, with our national effort focused in the dire straits of apparently overwhelming odds, we assembled a team of scientists at Bletchley park, built the British colossus and cracked the German Enigma code. In the post-war period we have seen a progressive decline of our ability to develop and apply some of the billiant fundamental research which has been carried out. That is a commonplace point and one we should never lose sight of.

With equal emphasis, I must also point out that the solution to the problem of our failure sufficiently to develop and apply technology and research is not to cut the research itself. I see no merit in cutting research because, by their very nature and character, the people who do the fundamental research will not be those who will be out in the hurly-burly of the market place, under the pressure from sales and production, giving us the products needed from the basic research.

The movement for saving British science is not an aberration. It is not a group of academies anxious to preserve their own funding, but a reaction to the cuts in all areas of Government finance for basic research. Cuts will not solve the Minister's or our country's problems in the application of that research. To give up on what we are doing well will not solve the problem of what we are doing badly. We must think how far behind we are. It was put very aptly in a debate in the other place when it was stated that

> "We are paddling in the shallows to reach the development boat, and that boat has yet to be pushed out." —[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 25 November 1985; Vol. 468, c. 755.]

That is how far we are still behind.

No doubt we shall hear from the Minister a whole series of individual statistics relating to the Brite programme. One does not hear very much about that but it is one of the successful European programmes. No doubt we shall hear about Esprit and the number of successes we have scored there, and about Eureka. Having poured cold water on Eureka and having told the French Government that it was unnecessary and that the private sector would do all that was necessary, the Government, perhaps in anticipation of today's debate, on 13 March gave their blessing to Eureka. However, it did not stop us from doing badly in the first share of the Eureka programme and we have to admit, that to a large extent that was because of the Government's lukewarm, half-hearted support for it.

I accept that the Minister will have to pad out his speech with all sorts of statistics relating to Brite, Esprit and Eureka. I believe that Eureka is the most recent of the European based collaborative programmes. No doubt the Minister will inform us what each of the acronyms refers to. However, I ask the Minister not to lose himself in a wealth of detail relating to each of the programmes, to the proportion of the grant, to carefully chosen statistics and to other information we shall no doubt hear, but to address himself to two central points. The second point is a great deal more important than the first.

Is there nothing that the Government can do to overcome the two criticisms which are levelled at the present programmes, even by those who are most in favour of them and in some cases by those who are deriving most benefit from them? The criticisms deal with the length of time it takes to get through the bureaucracy.

Inevitable obstacles exist in Brussels. I am sure that they are not created deliberately or because Brussels happens to be the centre of the official administration of the Common Market. They probably exist because, as with our own Civil Service, the problems of discrimination and the problems caused by being fair and undertaking a thorough evaluation, means that the evaluation periods are very wrong.

Does the Minister accept that the difficulties for small companies and universities are a great deal more formidable than those for large companies? A large company can afford a professional lobbyist; it can hire someone to live in Brussels, and he can stay there until he brings home the bacon. That is not the case for the universities since the Government hacked to pieces our research effort and support for the universities, nor is it the case for small companies.

Our heavy research and development effort, which is geared to the defence industry, is dominated by a few large companies. Indeed, it is difficult to get the spin off to the small companies. The pattern that is emerging from the

[Mr. Robinson]

European co-operative programme is similar, in that the beneficiaries are the very same large British companies with the resources to get in and overcome the bureaucracy involved.

I ask the Minister to look at that. Perhaps he will consider the possibility of Government help, by way of advice, introductions and even an increase in our office in Brussels, by which the small companies could be guided through the maze leading to the award of a grant under one of the European collaborative projects.

Mr. Wood: From my knowledge of British Aerospace and my experience in ICL, I know that there are a multitude of cases where small companies are taking part in projects, although the large companies may have initiated the development programme. Therefore, it is not true to say that small companies are being excluded in the way that the hon. Gentleman implies.

Mr. Robinson: I think that, under the Whips' orders, the hon. Gentleman must by trying to spin out the debate. I did not say that small companies were being excluded, but those involved in defence in this country do not have anything like the participation in the European programmes that I am sure he, the Minister, the Government and officials would like. There are problems for them. I am highlighting them and wondering whether the Government, in their wisdom and generosity, could extend a helping hand to the small companies in Britain. I assure the hon. Member for Stevenage, from my personal contact with such companies and knowledge of the matter, that those companies face formidable difficulties — perhaps they are as much in their own minds as in reality — in getting through the necessary process of evaluation.

Speaking in another place, the former vice-chancellor of the university located in the city that I have the honour to represent said in regard to the Alvey and Esprit programmes in Europe—I quote from col. 752——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Gentleman must paraphrase. I am sure that he can do that.

Mr. Robinson: I meant to say that I would not quote. I apologise.

The former vice-chancellor referred to the need for an expansion of our national programme. He said that our national situation is critical and that we do not attract enough people into engineering. He said that we are not established as far as we should be in Europe, that we should prevent the present national hæmorrhage of skills and first-class talent, and that we need a national effort such as the French have, which is wholly nationalistic in research and development. He called for a major Government initiative.

I suggest something to the Minister that is much less ambitious and more modest. Has he read what was written in the latest edition of the British Plastics Federation's communication, referring to the briefing of the hon. and learned Gentleman's Department? It stated that the DTI outlined proposed changes in the manner of funding R and D, which will lead to an increase in funds for the EEC R and D budget and to a reduction in funds for national R and D programmes. Is that the case?

Does the Treasury really regard everything that our companies successfully obtain from the various European funds — to which, of course, it has to contribute — as involving a necessary reduction from the Department of Trade and Industry's support for the innovation programme? If so, it follows that, on any analysis, Europe, let alone Britain—which is probably the worst off of the advanced nations in Europe — is in a dire crisis in relation to Japan and the United States. That is recognised by every other Government involved, even if it is not recognised by our Government.

The very magnitude of the requirements in Europe means that there will be no United Kingdom funding if the Treasury line is pursued. The Minister shakes his head, but not long ago a Minister in his Department told us that all Government spending was bad. The only logical conclusion to that is that all Government spending should be ended. For many a year we have not had a particularly positive approach to spending in support of industry. I know that much to their credit, officials are resisting the line put forward by the Treasury. They do not want a reduction in the support for the innovation programme. Can the Minister give us an assurance that there will not be that reduction?

One of our major companies, GEC, is very good at getting both national and international grants. It has a proposition under the Eureka project. However, one of the reasons we are doing so badly is that it has been held up on the ground that the Treasury argues that the funding is additional,—a new concept of additionality—and so it cannot put the money into that project since money is already committed under Support for Innovation. Alternatively, money no longer needs to be committed under SFI, because the Government are contributing to the Eureka project. That has been agreed by the companies and has been agreed, in principal, by the Governments. The French Government have put up their 50 per cent. They have put their money where their mouth is, but our Government are dragging their feet. I hope that the Minister will give me a straight answer on that point today.

The scale of resources being committed under the support for innovation programme and under other related programmes is tiny compared with France or Germany, not to mention the two giants whom we are trying to catch up—America and Japan. A distinguished former civil servant has put forward figures for the micro-electronic component industry and they speak for themselves. The French have increased their spending by 500 per cent. during the past four years. The Germans have more than doubled theirs, but we have barely increased ours.

The Government's policy is shameful because it is short-sighted. It is harmful because the Department of Trade and Industry is being humiliated by the Treasury. It is negligent because it ignores the needs of British industries and research institutions. Labour will still work to save British science. It will work to restore the research and development budgets of our universities and research institutes. We will back British enterprise, British technology and British management, in whom we have not lost faith. We will back those institutions in their efforts to co-operate with Europe and to obtain their fair share from Europe. That is the only way forward. While the Government are looking and walking backwards, Labour will have the courage, intelligence and self- interest to back Britain and British brains.

1.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Howard): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood) for raising this important subject and I congratulate him on the cogency of his observations. He drew attention to major developments in European co-operation in high technology. There can be no dispute that the success of those industries is critical to the future economic prosperity of the United Kingdom and Europe as a whole. It is especially vital that European industry should and will prove itself competitive in the emerging world markets for new technology if new jobs and wealth are to be created in Europe.

So far, European industry's performance in competing with the United States of America and Japan has been disappointing. In recent years, the Community's share of export markets for high technology has tended to decline while the penetration of imports into the Community in those sectors has increased. Yet this relative competitive weakness seems to be growing at a time when, according to the European Commission, the Community has been and is still spending a larger proportion than the United States of America or Japan on basic research. Unfortunately, Europe's strength in research is not matched by its performance in producing and selling products. We have a good record for winning Nobel prizes, but not for winning new markets. But there are positive signs of changing attitudes towards the better exploitation of research and development so as to sell products, processes and services not just in Europe but in world markets.

That new spirit is shown by the steps being taken to create a genuine common market in Europe, to match the large domestic markets enjoyed by United States and Japanese companies. The Community has had this objective for all of 30 years. But many non-tariff barriers, such as differing national standards, remain in place. The creation of standards which are applied throughout Europe is vital if real collaboration in high technology industries is to be fostered, as is the opening of public purchasing to create a more unified market.

In June last year, the Commission's White Paper "Completion of the Common Market" was welcomed by the European Council. This year, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, as the two countries holding the succeeding presidencies of the Community for the year, have identified more than 100 specific issues for decision. The process of opening the European markets is of central importance to the encouragement of co-operation by Europe's industry. Many of the individual measures taken to implement the White Paper will have a direct bearing on high technology Sectors such as information technology and telecommunications. In addition, the Eureka initiative—to which I will revert in detail later—will provide a clear link between the completion of the internal market and industrial collaboration by highlighting the measures which industry believes are essential to implement individual collaborative projects.

It is important also to recognise that the Community is playing a significant role in encouraging collaborative partnerships in high technology through aspects of its research and development programme. The most striking example is the Esprit programme, designed to strengthen Europe's capability in information technology by allowing companies to share costs and spread risks through co-operation across frontiers. The United Kingdom strongly backed the Esprit programme from the outset as an exciting and novel initiative. This view has been proved right by the response from industry during the two years the programme has run to date. The United Kingdom information technology industry has responded positively to the opportunities which Esprit offers. About 50 United Kingdom firms and 35 academic institutions are taking part in about 210 projects, which together represent more than two thirds of the work being supported under the programme. The whole programme represents a remarkable demonstration of European collaboration in an important high technology sector.

In computers, the Esprit programme is the centrepiece of European collaboration, but it is backed by a growing number of bilateral links. For example, the British and French Governments are exploring the idea of setting up a forum to encourage cross-frontier links between their two national industries.

The Community is developing programmes for research and development in a number of other areas which are also encouraging co-operation between firms in advanced technologies. The Brite programme is one example, which is concentrating on the application of new technology in more traditional sectors of industry. Another is the Race programme, which is concerned with the development of advanced telecommunications. All these programmes will help to bring together European industry into a collaborative effort which can handle those large, or particularly expensive research and development projects which can be more easily tackled at a European level than on a national basis.

A major development in the Community's research and development efforts will take place over the rest of this year with the discussion and agreement on a new framework programme for reseach and development between 1987 and 1991. The process of formulating and considering these new plans has only just begun, so I cannot discuss them in detail today. But the objective of the new programme must be quite clear: to address the research and development needs of European industry and to further the creation of a climate in which collaboration in high technology can lead on to real success in the market place.

Aerospace is another area where European collaboration has been an outstanding success. The current Airbus programme is the largest and most significant example of international collaboration in the field of civil aircraft. It has demonstrated that six European industrialists can combine their manufacturing resources to produce a highly competitive range of aircraft with a market appeal strong enough to challenge United States industry. The Airbus programme has also created the opportunity for numerous collaborative projects among European equipment manufacturers.

Both my hon. Friend the Member for Stevenage and the hon. Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson) referred to Government funding of the A330 and A340 projects. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State told the House last week, the Department has yet to receive any application from British Aerospace for financial assistance in respect of these programmes. When that application is received it will be considered on its merits,

[Mr. Michael Howard]

taking into account among other factors the prospects of the project achieving commercial viability and evidence that British Aerospace has tried to obtain private finance.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: Will the Minister give me an assurance on a matter to which the Secretary of State refused to respond when Trade and Industry questions were last before the House? It is not a hypothetical question because it relates to what is taking place. If the entirety of the money cannot be found from the private sector and if the other criteria are satisfied, including the criterion of the return on capital that is invested in the project, will the Government then, in principle, not be opposed to supporting the project?

Mr. Howard: I believe that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made the position entirely clear in the House last week. I would not wish to add a word to the remarks which he made on that occasion.

I now turn to Eureka. Eureka is designed to stimulate a competitive European industrial capability in advanced technologies by providing an international framework for predominantly industry-based action to improve the exploitation of research and development through creation of collaborative, cross-frontier projects between two or more firms in the 18 member countries. The aim of these projects is to produce high technology goods, processes and services with a worldwide, not just European, sales potential.

So Eureka provides a framework for European business collaboration in advanced technology. I emphasise business collaboration, the essence of the whole concept is that collaboration should be market-led, initiated and carried through on a commercial basis by companies themselves. The Eureka machinery for co-operation between Governments is specifically designed to be flexible and responsive — the minimum necessary to discharge Eureka's two key tasks, which are to provide a network for the exchange of information on, and opportunities for, collaborative projects and a Europewide forum to identify market obstacles to the success of the projects, and to put new impetus behind action to tackle them. These are obstacles such as differing technical standards and protective public purchasing.

Eureka emphatically is not a new international bureaucracy. There have recently been some rather ill-informed suggestions to the contrary. One newspaper had evidently heard that the 18 member countries have agreed to establish a central secretariat. It jumped to the conclusion that this will be some vast unwieldy organisation charged with the task of "co-ordinating the projects themselves". Nothing could be further from the truth — as had been made crystal-clear in a press statement issued by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 11 March when he announced the date of the London ministerial conference on Eureka. The alleged vast new bureaucracy will consist of just half a dozen professional people with a similar number in support. And their job will essentialy be to set up a data-bank and circulate information about Eureka projects.

Some newspapers have contained all-too-familiar calls for public money, echoed by the hon. Member for Coventry, North-West, who remains embedded in the old Labour party attitude of measuring each and every programme by the amount of money that can be thrown at it. Without any real regard to the qualitative nature of the targeting of Government assistance to areas where it can achieve most good.

I shall make two points perfectly clear. The first is that Eureka is not, and will not become, a new international mechanism for funding collaborative ventures. All 18 member countries are firmly agreed on that. Anything of the kind would be costly, wasteful and wholly unnecessary.

Secondly, it is absolutely right that the market itself — private capital — should be the primary source of finance for market-led projects of the kind that Eureka is designed to stimulate. I am certainly not saying that we see no role for Government support for industrial research and development. We of course recognise that, while high technology projects with genuine commercial potential should eventually show a profit, they often involve real risk in the initial research stages. So it is at this point that support from public funds can be justified to help the creation of what will become successful products, processes and services that will benefit not just the firms concerned but in aggregate, the country as a whole.

This is where our support for innovation scheme comes into the Eureka picture. Collaboration between British and European firms is an increasingly important development if those firms are to capture a real share of world markets. The Government are determined to make full and effective use of the SFI scheme to encourage British industry to take part in Eureka. I can put it no better than my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Information Technology, who said:

> "Collaboration is essential if business in Britain and in Europe as a whole is to remain competitive in new technologies. We are determined to make full and effective use of the resources available under the Support for Innovation scheme to encourage British industrial participation in Eureka.
>
> United Kingdom firms participating in Eureka projects are therefore eligible for support of up to 50 per cent. of their share of the applied research costs, and up to 25 per cent. of their share of development costs. Only one United Kingdom firm need be involved in a project to qualify for assistance at the higher level. In other respects, the terms of assistance in each case will be determined under the normal SFI criteria".

I should add that, following a recent exchange of views on the Eureka machinery on the support Governments are making available for Eureka projects, it is clear that these terms are very similar to those on which support is available in most other European countries.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: It does no good for the Minister to read out a press notice from the Department of Trade and Industry. Will the Minister categorically deny what the British Plastics Federation has circulated, which is to the effect that, as the support for the European collaborative ventures — in support of which all hon. Members stand—increases, the resources made available by the Department for the support for innovation scheme will decrease? Will the Minister please deny or confirm that?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman persists, as in other aspects of his approach, in inviting the House to regard the matter in black and white terms. He invites the House to adopt a simplistic approach. The House would not be inclined to regard such matters in such a misleading fashion.

There is no fixed approach to the funding of research and development. Of course, we have budgets for spending, but the exact balance between spending on

collaborative projects in Europe and purely national projects must depend, as any sensible person would expect it to, on the merits of the applications received.

Mr. Robinson: The French Government have a different approach. The Conservative Government also has a different approach to regional policy, which was to maximise our uptake of European funds. If we reduce our national funding we shall reduce the total funding available to British industry. The French Government ensure that for every franc or pound that they obtain from the various collaborative Europen ventures, one unit of Government funding is provided.

Will the Minister please say whether the Government's intention is to reduce the support available through the support for innovation scheme to national programmes, in favour of European programmes? I am sorry to put a direct question to the Minister but it is better for him to give me a direct reply.

Mr. Howard: I have made the Government's attitude clear and said that applications regarding both collaborative projects in Europe and purely national projects will be treated on their merits. I do not share the hon. Gentleman's perception of the French Government's attitude to the matter. It is probably wise to resist any temptation, although it is a considerable one, to follow him into the highways and byways of French politics. It will be interesting to see whether the new French Government's attitude to the large losses made by Renault is the same as that of their predecessors. I do not necessarily regard the decisions taken across the Channel as being the best touchstone to apply to decisions made by our Government. I am confident that the Government's attitude can stand analysis on its merits and has nothing to fear in comparisons with attitudes and decisions taken by our European Community partners.

The facts about Eureka are that there are already 26 Eureka projects actually going ahead; there are another 50 project proposals in the pipeline; and, in the specifically British context, United Kingdom firms are now involved in discussions on about half of these 50 new proposals. Eureka is still at a formative stage and it is certainly not perfect. But it is developing into a bandwagon on to which companies—British and European—increasingly want to climb. We, as the United Kingdom chairman, are doing our best to ensure that a reality is made of the concept.

It is clear from all the developments I have mentioned that co-operation in the high technology industries is a matter which is taken very seriously in Europe today. There are already many examples, within the Eureka framework and outside, of exciting new joint ventures in high technology involving European companies. I can assure my hon. friend and the House that the Government are playing their full part in encouraging these developments. At the end of the day it will be the degree of flair, innovation and marketing skills shown by our industries themselves which will decide whether Europe can improve its track record in competing for world markets. But the Government are determined to create the right conditions for European collaboration in the advanced technologies, and are working hard with other European countries, both inside and outside the Community, to achieve that objective.

2.2 pm

Mr. Wood: I wish to thank my hon. and learned Friend the Minister and the hon. Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson) for their speeches. I commend the motion on the Order Paper to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House strongly supports the policies pursued by Her Majesty's Government in European collaboration in research and development in high technology industries, including through Esprit and Eureka; and in addition wishes to see these industries further develop joint manufacturing and marketing projects.

Sport for the Disabled

2.2 pm

Mr. John Watts (Slough): I beg to move,

That this House recognises the important role which sport can play in improving the quality of life for disabled people; notes with concern that the extent of the Sports Council's support for sport for the disabled was only £100,000 from a total budget of £30 million in 1985-86; and calls upon the Sports Council to make a reality of its slogan 'Sport for All' by giving proper financial support to disabled sportsmen.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to draw attention to the provision of sports facilities for the disabled. My motion first recognises the important role which sports can play in improving the quality of life for disabled people. In support of that argument, perhaps I may refer to a letter from a constituent who is a member of an organisation known as SADSAD—the Slough and District Sports Association for the Disabled. She asks herself:

"What do I benefit as a member of SADSAD? I gain better confidence in myself as a person, a unique individual and take a much more positive and social attitude to the others."

Sports associations give the disabled the opportunity to achieve and excell in another sphere of activity, and to gain confidence and, above all, self-respect through competitive activity and participation in sports.

For disabled sportsmen, competition is on two levels. Naturally, they compete against each other, as all sportsmen do. However, there is also the important element of competition against the individual disability. Beating the disability is the aim of many of these people —to live life to the full and to overcome the difficulties that they have found in their way.

However, without the provision of specialist facilities, or at the very least careful design of sporting facilities intended for general use to ensure that access for the physically disabled is relatively easy, there can be many obstacles to be overcome before the intending sportsman of sportswoman reaches first base—participating in a chosen sport. While facilities designed to be suitable and accessible for disabled people are equally accessible and suitable for use of the able bodied, the reverse, sadly, is not the case.

It has to be recognised that disabled people in our community form a minority, but it is a pretty sizeable one. It is estimated that about 8 per cent. of our total population suffers from disability in one form or another—more than 4 million people, and some estimates suggest that the figure is higher. It is important for those of us who enjoy the good fortune of being able bodied not be negligent of the needs of the disabled or to be complacent about our own good fortune and good health. Some people are born with disabilities, but many more acquire disability through accident or illness.

In my local sports association for the disabled, only one in 10 of its disabled members were born disabled, and the other 90 per cent. have suffered from disabling accidents or illnesses at a later stage in their lives. For those who in their able bodied life have been keen sportsmen the realisation that disablement does not have to mean the end of their active participation in sport can provide a very important psychological prop during that difficult and agonising period of adjusting to a different style of life.

Sport can bring benefits to all, and it should be available to all. As I understand it, this is the proud boast of the Sports Council slogan, "Sport for all". Sadly, this proud boast is found to be lacking in substance when one examines the support that the Sports Council gives to disabled sportsmen and sportswomen. I was shocked to learn from a written answer on 28 January this year from my hon. Friend the Minister responsible for sport that the Sports Council's grant aid to organisations directly concerned with sport for disabled people was approximately £100,000 in each of the past three years. That is only 0·3 per cent. of its budget, which in the current year is £32·9 million, which grows to about £40 million in the next financial year.

To place that minimal expenditure of £100,000 in context, I note from the public expenditure White Paper section on the Sports Council that it has spent 11 times as much as that on public affairs to promote the council's aims and policies, including, presumably, its slogan "Sport for all".

It spends 15 times as much on what is described as management, which I assume to be a euphemism for administration. If the provision for disabled sportsmen did no more than reflect the 8 per cent. of our population who suffer from a disability, the Sports Council's expenditure in support of sport for the disabled would be more than £2·5 million a year against its actual spend of only £100,000.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): I shall deal with some of the points that my hon. Friend is making when I reply to the debate, but he says that the money to which he referred represents direct grants to specific organisations for the disabled. Will he bear in mind that the whole of the Sports Council's grant is aimed at all people? Is he able to say a few words about the integration of the disabled into the community? I should be interested in his comments about that aspect before I reply to his motion.

Mr. Watts: My hon. Friend has made a good point. I am not setting out to achieve some kind of sports apartheid in which the disabled have their section and the able-bodied have theirs. I said earlier that to the fullest possible extent sports facilities which are designed for general use should also cater for the needs of the disabled and bear in mind difficulty of access for the disabled so that there is the widest possible access for all. I acknowledge that some of the Sports Council's expenditure under other headings will indirectly be of benefit to the disabled, just as it benefits the whole of the community. None the less, if the Sports Council had been able to present its performance in meeting the needs of disabled people in a somewhat better light than that disturbingly low figure of £100,000 reveals, I believe that it would have taken that opportunity. I have seen no sign of that.

I acknowledge that the Sports Council has a wide responsibility, that one of its responsibilities is to promote centres of excellence, and that this has an inevitable effect upon the way in which it allocates its resources. However, it is important to recognise that it is not only the able bodied who can excel in sport. To my mind, the thalidomide victim who swims competitively, propelled only by stumps where arms and legs should be, also has a desire to excel and strives to excel and to achieve. That excellence and that achievement should also be recognised. Therefore, the Sports Council should accept the responsibility also to support centres of excellence for disabled sportsmen.

I am neither disabled nor, as my somewhat over-ample frame probably indicates, an active participant in sport or, indeed, a spectator. But that does not prevent me from understanding the immense pleasure which participation in sport brings to so many people, both the able bodied and the disabled. But my particular interest in sport for the disabled stems from my involvement with SADSAD, the organisation in my constituency, and my role as a patron of its Everest building appeal.

That appeal is so named because its organisers have set themselves what they see as the mountainous task of raising £300,000 to fund the building of a purpose-built sports centre for the disabled at Stoke park in Slough. The plans for this centre include, obviously, a level single-storey building so that there is easy access throughout, with a major sports hall marked out for a wide variety of sports, including badminton, basketball, handball and volleyball. Other activities which are planned include archery, athletics, bowls, darts, judo, movement, dance and table tennis.

That part of the project represents only the foothills. There are further plans for phases 2, 3 and onwards which would provide facilities for track events, swimming and bowling. It is no exaggeration to liken the task SADSAD has set itself to the scaling of Everest.

I am not one of those who argue that voluntary organisations should look primarily to the public purse for all their funding. Since the appeal was launched in 1983, voluntary funding of £27,000 has been raised. That has been sufficient to pay the professional fees charged to complete all the design work and to obtain planning permission so that construction can begin as soon as the balance of the funds becomes available.

Berkshire county council has given the site for the sports centre at a peppercorn rent of £10 a year. Discussions are taking place with Slough borough council and the South Buckinghamshire district council about financial contributions from those authorities. Voluntary fund raising continues relentlessly. The mayor of Slough has approached the European Commission through the good offices of Baroness Elles, who is our MEP, but an application for support to the Sports Council has been deferred until the end of this year. That is disappointing. I hope that the Sports Council's consideration will be favourable and that it will recognise that the facility not only will serve the people of Slough but will have the potential to form a regional centre of excellence for sports for the disabled — a facility of "wider than local significance", as the public expenditure White Paper stated.

Each year, SADSAD hosts a weekend of sporting activities to which disabled sportsment from all over the country come. The programme of events at last September's meeting shows a wide range of activities, starting at 9 am on Saturday and continuing until 8 pm on Sunday, encompassing all sorts of field events and going down to draughts and dominoes. Most of them are active participatory sports. I have had the pleasure of attending those sporting events and seeing the pleasure felt by the sportsmen in their ability to participate and seeing their great courage, bravery and determination to overcome their disabilities so that they can achieve in sport.

What more could be done if only this purpose-built centre were available to the disabled people of my constituency, the surrounding areas and the rest of the southern region? I hope that some of the Budget proposals, including those that extend tax relief to charitable donations, will provide a further welcome boost to our voluntary fund raising efforts. I hope that local companies will seize the opportunity to put some of the profits they have earned in the community back in the community for the benefit of disabled people, most of whom are their employees. I hope that employees of local companies will take the opportunity to contribute to this project through the payroll deduction scheme with the benefit of tax relief.

We shall exploit all the oportunities to the hilt, but there is still room for an element of public funding. Each year millions of pounds are spent on the provision of sports facilities at public expense through the Sports Council and local authorities. In the past 10 years, the Slough corporation has spent £15 million on the provison of sports facilities locally—facilities, it must be said, which are used predominantly by the able bodied.

No one asks able bodied sportsmen to raise cash before any of the facilities are provided and before the local authority makes a contribution. No one asks able bodied sportsmen to carry on fund raising after the facility has been provided in order to defray the running cost. Why is it that such a demand should be made, almost uniquely on disabled sportsmen, who have extra disabilities and obstacles to overcome before they even reach the starting point of participating in sport? Why should they be required to meet such stringent requirements before the public purse strings can be loosened just a little?

I am in favour of voluntary effort, and I intend no pun when I say that people should stand on their own feet, because that is precisely what the members of SADSAD and other disabled sports associations do to the best of their physical ability. However, they need some support, the support that is readily available to the able bodied. The Sports Council has a responsibility to take a lead, and I call upon it to face its responsibilities for disabled sportsmen and to make a reality of what is at present no more than an empty slogan, "Sport for all".

2.22 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) for raising this matter. I attach considerable importance to this subject, and so do my colleagues in Government. I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House agree on the importance of consideration for the disabled. If my hon. Friend's motion had been the first and not the third one on the Order Paper, we would have had a sizeable attendance, because he and I remember that for Friday debates about the disabled in the past there was always a queue of hon. Members outside the door, waiting to get in to talk about the subject. It is a matter that touches deeply our lives and the lives of a number of our constituents.

My contact with the disabled over the years has been fairly considerable. They desperately wish to be integrated in the community and not to have too much attention focused upon them. They do not want a spotlight placed upon them or for there to be too much probing discussion. I should like to develop that point in my remarks about the integration of disabled people into sport, a subject I mentioned to my hon. Friend in my intervention. The Sports Council's policy is enthusiastic on this point.

We fully recognise the value to disabled people of all ages of participation in sport and recreational activities. That is not only because of the important health benefits

[Mr. Richard Tracey]

which are also enjoyed by the able-bodied, but because of the sheer enjoyment and the contact that they enjoy with their fellows. In my responsibility for sport and recreation I am keen to promote community participation in all sports at grass roots level. I have talked about that many times both in the House and outside, and I view as a priority that we should have full-scale community participation in sport for all our people. Disabled people should have the same opportunity as able-bodied people to participate in sport.

My hon. Friend has mentioned his experiences in his constituency, and they are obviously good ones. We have all had such experiences. My constituency is fortunate to have the Kingston Association for the Disabled and SADSAD sounds similar. The Kingston association has a lively and active secretary and a full programme of events. Indeed, in Surrey, around my constituency, the disabled have a considerable involvement in sport. It shows how well-organised things are because I have already been asked to a special football tournament for the disabled in Surrey in May 1987. No doubt that will be an excellent day and, as with other sporting contests, it will be followed in the evening by, I am told, a good dinner at which I am asked to speak. That is the sort of enthusiasm that I find.

I have had contact with sports for the disabled for a number of years. When I was at school one of the best days in our rowing calendar was rowing against the Worcester college for the blind on the River Avon and the River Severn. We had some real needle matches. Latterly, I have been involved in the triathlon competition at the royal showground at Stoneleigh where co-ordinated teams of the able-bodied and disabled join in shooting and fishing. The able-bodied ride horses and the disabled compete in a slalom event. That is the sort of thing that leads me to believe that provision is being made, some of it voluntary, some of it provided from public funds. The provision is there and the keenness is there.

My hon. Friend has drawn attention in his motion to the Sports Council's policies towards, and funding of, sports for the disabled. He will no doubt be aware that all Government money specifically allocated for the development of sport, particularly the unique services, is channelled through the Sports Council. It is for the council to decide how much of its funds are specifically allocated to various sports or to a specific area such as sport for the disabled. Mr. Ken Roberts is an active member of the Sports Council. He is disabled and he specifically represents the views of the disabled and takes part in the general discussions of the council. The council distributes its funds in the light of its policies and priorities with fair consideration of all those matters.

Apart from the Sports Council, I am glad that my hon. Friend has not forgotten, that the major contribution to sport from public funds in Britain is the £700 million going through the local authorities, of which a large part is from the rate support grant.

My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to matters of planning and design of sports facilities. I am glad to say that the Sports Council takes a great interest in those premises that are particularly within its direct responsibility—the national centres. In the annual report for the last year, mention is made of Worcester college for the blind participating in mountaineering and rock-climbing exercises at the Plas-y-Brenin national centre in Wales and also the special courses for deaf squash players at the Bisham abbey premises near Marlow, close to my hon. Friend's constituency.

I can assure my hon. Friend that disabled people have certainly not been forgotten by the Sports Council in the exercise of the "Sport for all" ideal. The European "Sport for all" charter was, of course, aimed at all sectors of the community and the council is concerned to encourage disabled sportsmen and women to integrate—that is an important word—with the more able-bodied, wherever appropriate.

The principle of integration with the able-bodied is an important one to grasp in understanding the Sports Council's funding of the facilities for the disabled. There is no direct reference to it in my hon. Friend's motion. Nor should we overlook the fact that there are a number of sports in which the disabled compete on equal terms with the able-bodied. I have spoken already of rowing and canoeing, and I can also mention archery, shooting, bowls, and sailing.

I should give more details of the Council's grant-aid policy. The motion refers to sports Council support of £100,000 for sport for the desabled, and while that figure is correct, it represents only the value of direct grant aid to specific disabled sport organisations such as the British sports association for the disabled—

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES (PROMOTION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object

Second Reading deferred till Friday 11 April.

MEDICAL ACT 1983 (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object

Second Reading deferred till Friday 2 May.

CHESTERFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL (GENERAL POWERS) BILL

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The Bill of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) was referred to the Examiners on 19 March and their report has not yet been received. The Second Reading cannot be moved until that occurs.

Michael Martin (Report)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): I thank the House for the opportunity to raise once again the case of Michael Martin by way of an Adjournment debate. As the House is probably aware, and as the Minister is certainly aware, the death of Michael Martin in Broadmoor some 18 months ago really lit a touch paper to a torch which began to illuminate a number of matters.

The matter moved forward from there by the appointment of an inquiry under Miss Shirley Ritchie, QC, which reported in the summer of last year. Many of us who have an interest in this area and in mental health generally waited with some interest to see to what extent the Ritchie report would be received by the Government. The initial reaction is that they accepted all the recommendations, as I understand it, except one. The Mental Health Act Commission, in a release dated the same day — 30 August—urged the Government to change their mind on that recommendation. I hope that this afternoon, I can deal with that recommendation and then widen the issue into general matters which appertain to people who are detained in places such as Broadmoor.

That recommendation was one which, on the face of it, seems to any sensible man or woman to be perfectly reasonable. It recommends that people should not be administered sedative drugs, particularly heavy sedative drugs, unless it be done under the authority of and by a medical practitioner. There are few people in this land who would feel happy if they knew that the decision as to dosage for particular sedatives did not lie in the hands of a medical practitioner.

Michael Martin was detained in Broadmoor. There had been an incident, the facts of which are not pertinent now. After the incident Michael Martin was physically restrained, stripped of his clothes and injected. The injection was made by a nurse. The injection he was given was heavy — 500 ml of one sedative and 200 ml of another. The tragedy was that he had already received, if my memory serves me correctly, some 400 ml of a further sedative earlier that day. He had eaten and they put him in a side room. He choked to death on his own vomit. Of course, certain physical injuries had been sustained when he was restrained, but that issue need not concern us this afternoon.

Any of us who considers those matters with any care appreciates that in mental hospitals there are occasions when people should be, need to be and have to be restrained for their own safety. How they are restrained should be the subject of careful training. How they should be dealt with medically must, of necessity, mean very careful medical training.

When one puts a drug into a human being, sometimes against his will, one cannot predict with complete certainty what will happen. The tragedy in Michael's case was that the mixture or the cocktail—call it what one will—of drugs undoubtedly led to vomiting, as the report shows, and to his death. I do not blame the staff of Broadmoor in any way. I do not seek in this Adjournment debate to cast any aspersions on them. I hope that we can learn some lessons from that tragedy, and ensure that it never occurs again and that the standards in the secure mental hospitals of Broadmoor, Rampton, Moss Side and Park Lane are raised.

The people who serve in those institutions take on an onerous task. Unless, as a society, we give them the assistance that they need, we are not fair to them nor to the patients in those hospitals. If it means — it must mean this — that we have to increase the staffing levels in those four institutions, so be it, because a society that is not prepared to help the weakest in its midst, and those in greatest need, is a pretty poor society. People find themselves in secure units because they are said to have committed a criminal offence — one accepts that the majority have, but sometimes they have not. They are, through no fault of their own, deemed to be extremely ill. Mental illness is not a glamorous subject. It does not excite great headlines. Few people are prepared to fight the corner for it, but I assure the Minister that those who are prepared to do so will continue to press and press on those matters.

The more I read of the Ritchie report, and the more carefully I consider how the terms of reference were interpreted, the more I believe that only one narrow aspect of the matter has as yet been explored. The exploration that one seeks is in no way an attempt to criticise what has happened. We hope that the exploration is in the spirit of seeking ways to prevent tragedies in the future and to improve and enhance the standard of care in hospitals.

The one recommendation that the Government could not accept states:

> "The decision to administer heavy sedatives should be made by a doctor and not by nursing staff. The decision should be made at the time of the incident by a doctor in attendance on the ward. He should be made fully aware of the extent of the violence immediately preceding his attendance and the quality and quantity of food recently consumed by the patient."

My next remark is in no way critical of the nursing profession. Is it right to put upon the nurses at Broadmoor the onerous decision of making decisions about the injection of heavy sedatives? The Mental Health Act Commission says no, and most of the members of the medical profession to whom I have spoken say no. Everybody says no, but the Government say yes. I accept that it will mean that doctors will have to be in attendance on the wards at Broadmoor, perhaps around the clock. I accept that it will mean more doctors. But is that not a small, and, indeed, the right price to pay? Such important decisions could then be taken by those trained to take them. The staff at Broadmoor would be the first to say that their training should be longer and more intensive. It is not adequate for the decisions that have to be taken. The same applies to Rampton, Park Lane, and Moss Side, and the other secure hospitals. Some mental hospitals, including Rainhill in my constituency, have secure units attached to them. The same principle must apply. If we are to learn any lesson from Michael's death, let it be that expertise must be brought to bear when administering heavy sedatives.

I referred earlier to the danger of the drug cocktail. A person needs to be a specialist to understand such things, and needs to be trained for years before being able to take the right decisions. The doctors in attendance at Broadmoor have specialised, and have not come straight from college. They are very experienced men. Is it too much to ask, then, that a doctor should be there to make the decision when a patient needs heavy sedation? He

[Mr. Gerald Bermingham]

would have to consider what food the patient had eaten, because of the risk of choking to death on vomit when sedated.

In the case of Michael Martin, a doctor was not in attendance, there was a death, and there are lessons to be learnt. The report shows that the wing where Michael was located lacked facilities. I do not blame the staff, who have to cope with horrendous problems. However, the fact that a person is mentally ill does not mean that he needs to be sitting in a chair in a group of 12 for endless hours day after day. That is not the way to help. Outdoor facilities should be available. I appreciate that that would cost money, and that it would mean more staff and greater investment. But, our society can afford that.

Let it never be said that the sick are too heavy a cost for society to bear. After all, a person goes to Broadmoor because he is ill. It may well be that he has committed an offence, but that offence may have been committed before he was ill. Of course, some patients have committed no offence, and are just ill.

Money lies at the root of our problems. The facilities are inadequate, as are staffing numbers. Even the buildings are inadequate. I have raised this subject in the hope that a life lost in tragic circumstances will not have been lost in vain. If all five of the report's recommendations can be implemented, and if the Minister gives an undertaking that he will consider some of the matters I have raised about facilities, staffing and the general conditions within secure units, that tragedy may well turn out to be one step along the road to better conditions for many.

2.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I am grateful to the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) for raising this important matter. He touched on the tragic death of Mr. Michael Martin and covered broader issues, and I shall try to respond as well as I can to all his points. If I have not covered some of them, I or my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State will write to the hon. Gentleman. I accept the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that we must learn from such tragedies, and that we must constantly strive to enhance the standards of care in such difficult cases. I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman's consistent interest in the complex and important area of mental health and his activities with the organisation MIND.

Given the tragic case of Mr. Martin, the reaction that it caused and the inquest's finding of

"accidental death aggravated by lack of care,"

this was clearly a matter of such public concern that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), the former Minister for Health, decided to establish an inquiry. It was also an opportunity for the staff at Broadmoor to put their side of the story relating to the events of that day and other events. My right hon. and learned Friend invited Miss Shirley Ritchie, QC to undertake the inquiry. She sought advice on clinical matters from two highly respected clinicians — Dr. Higgins, a consultant psychiatrist, and Miss McCloughlin, a district nursing officer.

Before I talk about some aspects of the report and what has been done to improve procedures at Broadmoor hospital in the light of Miss Ritchie's recommendations, and in the light of decisions taken separately, in some instances before her recommendations appeared, it is important to emphasise the context in which patients such as Mr. Martin are cared for in special hospitals. As the hon. Gentleman understands, it is a difficult job, and he paid tribute to the staff. We recognise that the physical environment is far from ideal. Broadmoor hospital is well over 100 years old, and despite the best efforts of all to improve the fabric of the building, to reduce patient numbers significantly during the past 10 years, and to advance therapeutic and rehabilitation regimes, it remains a difficult place in which to work.

Problems are exacerbated by the fact that staff are dealing with mentally disordered patients who, because they are either so difficult to manage or so prone to extreme dangerousness, cannot be satisfactorily cared for anywhere except in conditions of special security. The House will agree that we owe it to the staff to recognise that those problems exist, and that was certainly the case with Mr. Martin.

I do not wish to give details about patients, but it is clear that Mr. Martin was a young man who fluctuated sharply between moods of cheerfulness and considerable violence. During his time in Broadmoor, he made more than 20 unprovoked attacks on staff and other patients. Yet, between those bouts, he displayed a happy and lively personality. The nursing staff were fond of Mr. Martin, who was one of their younger patients, and as Miss Ritchie said in her report, he became something of a pet on the ward. However, there is no doubt that he could be a difficult patient to handle. It is to the credit of those looking after him that, while in Norfolk house, he showed some overall improvement, to the extent that consideration had been given to the possibility of a planned transfer of him back to Bexley hospital.

Miss Ritchie's report appeared in August 1985 and Ministers welcomed the care and sympathy with which the task was carried out and the skill with which she identified the problems and shortcomings that had occurred. Miss Ritchie made five recommendations, all of which were accepted except that which related to the practice of administering heavy sedatives, to which the hon. Member for St. Helen's South referred with some emphasis.

There is no doubt that the administering of sedatives is a difficult issue in all hospitals, and especially so in hospitals such as Broadmoor in the circumstances which I have described. Section I of Miss Ritchie's report discusses this issue in detail and the responsibilities that attach to it. It quotes in full the notice issued on 8 October 1984 by the medical director to all nursing staff and doctors in Broadmoor. The effect of the notice was to forbid the administration of any medication unless it had previously been prescribed in writing by a doctor. The issue of a prescription in writing is known as the PRN basis, and it specifies in advance the circumstances in which particular forms of medication may be administered to a named patient. The effect of insisting that a decision to administer heavy sedatives should be made by a doctor and not by nursing staff and of specifying that the decision

"should be made at the time of the incident by a doctor in attendance on the ward"

would be to prevent medical and nursing staff at the hospital from using the PRN practice, to which I have referred, which is generally accepted as being available for use by medical and nursing staff in hospitals. As I have

said, this was the only one of Miss Ritchie's recommendations that was not accepted by the Department.

The effect of the recommendation would have been to remove from the nursing staff at Broadmoor hospital, and Broadmoor hospital alone, the professional responsibility of a qualified nurse to exercise judgment in the administration of properly prescribed medicines.

The hon. Member for St. Helens, South has suggested that everyone agrees with Miss Ritchie and that no one agrees with the Department's view. That is not so. Among others, the Royal College of Psychiatrists, the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting and the Royal College of Nursing have all confirmed that they agree with decision not to accept this one recommendation of the Ritchie report.

There is no doubt that when the tragic incident involving Michael Martin occurred there was a degree of confusion and lack of precision. I think that it is clear that the effect of the two notices that have since been issued by the medical director is to remove all uncertainty and ambiguity and to ensure that the practice at Broadmoor hospital will conform with the most demanding standards that might be applied in any other hospital. The responsible medical officer is involved in evey decision to employ advance prescribing. He specifies the dosage of a particular drug to be administered in defined circumstances to a particular patient. For example, in the case of a patient who is thought likely to have a disturbed episode, it might be decided that it would be in the patient's own interests if drug treatment were given immediately. If at the same time there are contra-indications, senior nurses will seek medical guidance and will not administer the drug automatically.

Multidisciplinary working, underpinned by clinical teams concerned with the overall care of the patient, is practised in Broadmoor as in other psychiatric hospitals. Decisions on medication are taken in that context. There may be occasions when it is essential that a patient is given medication without delay. Advance prescription is decided in the light of discussions between the members of the clinical team. Following the administration of such a prescription there would be a full review by the clinical team. That is in step with current thinking on crisis intervention throughout the National Health Service.

The hon. Gentleman said that some members of the Mental Health Act Commission are not disposed to accept the Department's view. Baroness Trumpington has had discussions with the chairman of the commission and we are continuing to investigate the issue through a working party. I emphasise that this situation obtains throughout the Health Service and has been extremely carefully considered. We shall have to move carefully before we go in the direction urged by the hon. Gentleman.

All the other recommendations in the report by Miss Ritchie have been adopted. That is a demonstration of our commitment to continue improving as best we can our care and treatment of such patients, given the inherrently difficult problems.

Prior to that inquiry, a number of matters were already under consideration or had been acted upon by the hospital. For example, there was training in restraint for staff. Just before Mr. Martin's death the hospital management team decided that Broadmoor hospital staff should undertake such courses and begin training before the end of 1984.

During 1984, the Department had in progress a comprehensive review of seclusion policy and procedures in the special hospital service. In April 1985 a report constituting policy for local application was sent to each hospital. That is another concern emphasised by Miss Ritchie's report.

On 15 October 1984, the hospital provided nursing staff with written guidance about the internal movement of patients in Norfolk house. The number of beds has been reduced in Norfolk house, where Mr. Martin was established, from 39 to 36, and the staff has been increased by one. The hospital management team has plans to reduce from three to two the wards in Norfolk house. A key element is the provision of a re-socialisation unit on the top floor. The scope for occupational therapy has been considered carefully by the hospital management team. It is seeking improvements.

We have been talking about an extremely difficult and emotive case. Everyone concerned was deeply disturbed by it. When tragedies such as this occur it is essential to learn from them. Whether or not mistakes are made, we can always learn. That was the objective in conducting the report. I am confident that we and the hospital authorities generally have learnt from the Ritchie report. We can take some comfort from that. We must always keep on trying, but we shall never reach perfection in such a difficult area.

We shall keep the administration of sedatives under review. The circumstances in which sedatives may be prescribed have been carefully examined. We are talking about a longstanding practice which has been found to be adequate and, indeed, necessary, given the type of emergencies that inevitably arise from time to time.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 24 March 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Mold bypass

1. **Mr. Raffan** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the starting date for the construction of the proposed Mold bypass.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): Subject to the satisfactory completion of engineering design and statutory procedures we expect the scheme to be ready to start in the period January 1988 to December 1990. This accords with the provisional programme set out in "Roads in Wales 1985".

Mr. Raffan: Is my hon. Friend aware that any delay in starting the construction of the Mold bypass will seriously hinder the industrial development and creation of jobs on the Bromfield park industrial estate and the Nercwys road industrial park at Mold? In view of the danger that that could mean the loss of industrial momentum in Delyn, which the Government have done so much to promote, will he seriously consider reverting to an earlier starting date?

Mr. Roberts: I assure my hon. Friend that there has been no delay. However, it is not really a practicable proposition to advance the start of the scheme. We are already working to the earliest possible start date.

Radioactive Discharges

2. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how regularly his Department monitors radioactive discharges from nuclear installations into the environment in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Mark Robinson): Monitoring of radioactive discharges from nuclear installations in Wales is carried out by Her Majesty's radiochemical inspectorate on our behalf. Its programme includes quarterly sampling of liquid discharges from both Trawsfynydd and Wylfa power stations. This is in addition to monitoring by the operators themselves to meet Welsh Office requirements.

The effects of discharges to the atmosphere and to the aquatic environment are monitored on our behalf by the food science division and the fisheries radiological inspectorate of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Thomas: I thank the Minister for his reply. Will he confirm the information that I have been given by the Central Electricity Generating Board, that the discharge from Trawsfynydd, which included some radioactive particulate matter, did not present any radiological hazard to the public?

Mr. Robinson: I am able to confirm that. The incident at Trawsfynydd is now under investigation, and reports from various bodies are expected in the near future.

Mr. Grist: Will my hon. Friend see that his Department constantly gives every reassurance to the public on the safety of nuclear power generation? Nuclear power is of great advantage to many of our competitors and to the people of Scotland, who get cheaper electricity because 40 per cent. of it is generated by nuclear power?

Mr. Robinson: I can give that assurance. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy illustrated that point a few days ago when he said that the safety record of the nuclear industry in the United Kingdom continues to be second to none.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Is the Minister aware that the public are becoming increasingly concerned about the hazards posed by nuclear installations? For example, does he realise that there is a recognition in the Severnside area that it needs another such power station like it needs a hole in the head? If the CEGB attempts to walk in the face of popular feeling, it will meet the strongest possible resistance.

Mr. Robinson: I strongly refute the comments made by the hon. Gentleman. Authorisation of discharges in Severnside rests with my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Aquatic monitoring of the Severn takes place regularly, and sites in Gwent are included in the station monitoring procedures. The Welsh Office keeps in close touch with all Departments concerned. The public can rest assured that monitoring is carried out effectively and continuously.

Sir Raymond Gower: Is it not a fact that the nuclear power industry has had a remarkable history of safety rather than of danger? To that extent, has it not been much safer than other industries, including even the coal industry?

Mr. Robinson: I thank my hon. Friend for that remark. I can confirm that that is the case. It is important not to get carried away by scare stories which do not have any basis in reality.

EC Farm Prices

4. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from Welsh livestock farmers about the negotiations on European Community farm prices; and if he will make a statement.

20. **Sir Raymond Gower** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from farmers in Wales and in the area of Vale of Glamorgan council, respectively, concerning negotiations on European Economic Community farm prices; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): I and my officials have already met both farming unions on several occasions for substantive discussion on the European Community farm price

proposals for 1986-87. I have carefully noted their views, and they will be taken into account in the forthcoming negotiations. I have had no separate representations from farmers in the Vale of Glamorgan council area.

Mr. Livsey: Does the Secretary of State agree with his right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food that farmers in Wales should receive less in the current price review than they did last year?

Mr. Edwards: I am sure that price restraint is necessary if we are not to continue to increase the already very large surpluses in the Community. Indeed, that position has been generally accepted by the farmers unions in their discussions with us. I should be interested to hear whether it is the view of the Liberal party that we should seek to boost the wasteful surpluses.

Sir Raymond Gower: Is my right hon. Friend optimistic or otherwise about the outcome of the negotiations?

Mr. Edwards: Clearly there is a difficult period of negotiation ahead. The Community has now enlarged. One of our principal objectives in the negotiations is to see that none of the measures discriminates against British farmers, but that British farmers are fairly treated alongside farmers in the other Community countries.

Mr. Harvey: In view of the sharp fall in farm incomes last year, will my right hon. Friend guarantee that, in particular, the sheepmeat regime, which is vital for many hill producers in Wales, is preserved?

Mr. Edwards: I share my hon. Friend's view about the importance of the sheepmeat regime. Indeed, it is because of the success of that regime and the fact that we are not so dependent on cereals in Wales that the fall in farm incomes in Wales was so much less than in the rest of the United Kingdom. The Commission's proposals envisage the continuation of the sheepmeat regime in substantially its present form.

Mr. John: As reform of the common agricultural policy is intertwined with this year's price proposals, does the Secretary of State accept that the Commission's proposals on both beef and sheepmeat discriminate against the present United Kingdom farm structure and must be changed?

Mr. Edwards: I agree that there are discriminatory proposals before us. When I started answering this question, I said that one of the Government's principal objectives was to resist the Commission's discriminatory proposals, which apply in the cereal sector as well in the two sectors mentioned by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. McQuarrie: Does my right hon. Friend accept that hill and upland farmers in Wales suffer the same problems as those in Scotland? Will he ensure that in any negotiations within the Community the beef premium is maintained, because it is essential for those rural areas?

Mr. Edwards: I assure my hon. Friend that we attach the same importance to the beef premium scheme in Wales as he does to the scheme in Scotland. As he knows, there are proposals for reforming the beef regime generally. There may be a need for general reform, but we attach great importance to the beef premium scheme. However, it will be a difficult negotiation, because our views on the scheme are not shared by most other members of the Community.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: Does the Secretary of State, who is responsible for agriculture in Wales, intend to take part in the negotiations?

Mr. Edwards: I do not intend to go to Brussels because I do not believe that that would strengthen our negotiating position. The proper way to protect the interests of different parts of the United Kingdom is to see that we meet the farmers unions, discuss the proposals in detail and then present a single negotiating position within the Community. It is already difficult enough to present sensible negotiations in a Community of Twelve. I do not believe that we strengthen the Welsh case by trying to isolate ourselves. Anyone who thinks that simply does not understand either the nature of the Community or what is really important for Welsh farmers.

Dr. Roger Thomas: the Secretary of State is prepared to travel abroad on behalf of Wales and to listen to the Farmers Union of Wales, why does he not do a proper job and visit Brussels on behalf of the farmers of west Wales? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that 10 per cent. of farmers in west Wales are in dire financial straits and that they would be glad to see him go to Brussels and do a proper job for Wales?

Mr. Edwards: I am flabbergasted by the hon. Gentleman's remarks. If there is one thing that the farmers of west Wales understand, which the hon. Gentleman does not, it is that they benefit from being part of the general arrangements for the purchasing of milk and for the support of agriculture. They know that they gain enormously from being part of the England and Wales arrangements and that it would be a total catastrophe for them if they were isolated or separated from arrangements which are of such benefit to them.

Labour Statistics

5. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest unadjusted figures for unemployment in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales; what were the equivalent figures in May 1979; and what was the percentage increase in each case.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The unadjusted February 1986 figures for Newport, Gwent and Wales are 213,288, 30,602 and 188,405. Unadjusted figures for 1979 were produced on a different basis and cannot properly be compared with this year's figures.

Mr. Hughes: Is the Secretary of State not concerned about the mounting redundancies and closures in the area? The recent example of Standard Telephones closing its electronics factory at Newport is but a case in point. On the Secretary of State's recent visit to Japan, was he able to capitalise, by way of new investment, on the good will which I found on my recent visit shortly before his?

Mr. Edwards: I cannot say that all the Japanese industrialists whom I saw had the name of the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) on their lips. I do not know what influence he may have had for goood or evil, but I am certain that in the coming months there will be further significant investment by Japanese companies in Wales and that that investment will far exceed the job losses to which the hon. Member referred.

Mr. Raffan: When will the two pilot schemes announced in the Budget—job start and job counselling

—for the long-term unemployed be implemented and extended throughout Wales? How many extra staff will be taken on at jobcentres in Wales to ensure that job counselling is effective and covers all the long-term unemployed?

Mr. Edwards: We shall put the new schemes into operation as quickly as possible. I am meeting the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission this week to discuss the detailed implementation and the exact numbers that are to be applied in Wales. In advance of that meeting I would rather not add to my general comments.

Mr. Geraint Howells: Is the Secretary of State able to tell the House when the unemployment figures for Wales will take a downward trend, because during the past seven years they have been going up and up?

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Gentleman has asked that question on so many occasions he should know the answer. I have no intention of making such forecasts. However, I can tell him that very substantial capital investment in industry is taking place in Wales. We are continuing to attract about 20 per cent. of the inward investment for the whole of the United Kingdom, and we have recently had some notable successes, such as attracting Renishaw to Cwmbran. We know of a considerable number of major new investments which will create jobs in Wales and which will be announced in the coming months.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Does my right hon. Friend agree that last week's Budget was the best prescription for the country continuing to generate more new jobs faster than all other countries in Europe?

Mr. Edwards: I agree that the Budget will contribute to more new jobs. It also confirms that the Government's underlying policies are leading to continued growth faster than elsewhere in the Community, and to falling inflation. We have introduced a tripartite package of measures designed to help enterprise, the young and the long-term unemployed. They are in addition to the substantial range of measures that we have already announced to help the unemployed and to improve youth training.

Mr. Rogers: Does the Secretary of State accept that the measures that he says have been undertaken are simply not working? Is he aware that on the Penrhys housing estate, which has a community of 3,000 people and unemployment of over 80 per cent. among both young and old, severe problems are being caused because the measures that the Government have introduced are not working? Why does the Secretary of State not accept that and do something positive instead?

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Gentleman has asked me to do something positive. I remind him that the Government have introduced the priority estates programme, which is already beginning to result in improvements on the estate that he has mentioned. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not running down an important programme which is designed to improve conditions on an estate which has been in its present state for some years, and which was not built under the auspices of this Government. We have taken positive measures, which have been greatly welcomed, and I believe that they will improve conditions on the estate to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Mr. Best: Contrary to what the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) said, is it not a fact that the special employment measures that the Government have introduced are working extremely well? For example, is it not a fact that 61 per cent. of those who become part of the enterprise allowance scheme are still trading two years after having joined it?

Mr. Edwards: Yes, I believe that is right. I have no doubt that the scheme has been extremely successful.

Mr. Rowlands: A couple of weeks ago the Secretary of State announced his valley community investment scheme, and there were high hopes that the Budget would bring additional moneys for the Welsh Development Agency and the construction industry. Why has the right hon. Gentleman been left so empty handed after the Budget? Our valley communities need new investment through the WDA.

Mr. Edwards: If an earlier question had been asked, I would have said that the WDA, which has spent about £624 million between January 1976 and March 1986, will be spending about £76·8 million in 1986-87. That is substantial expenditure. There will be a great deal spent in the valleys, including expenditure on derelict land. As I told the House during the Welsh day debate, the expenditure of the WDA will be directed especially at making effective the valleys' initiative, which I launched and which the hon. Gentleman supported, and for whose support I am grateful.

Killan Fach Farm, Dunvant, Swansea

6. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Secretary of State for Wales when his Department delivered the letter sent on 24 February to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Robinson) from the hon. Member for Gower to the inspector holding the public inquiry at the Guildhall, Swansea, on 5 and 6 March into an appeal for residential development at Killan Fach farm, Dunvant, Swansea.

Mr. Mark Robinson: A copy of the hon. Member's letter was sent by first-class post from the Department's Cardiff office to the inspector's home address on 3 March.

Mr. Wardell: To avoid any future possible embarrassment to right hon. and hon. Members, will the Welsh Office ensure that when Members of this place attend public inquiries steps are taken to enable inspectors to receive their submissions before the inquiries commence?

Mr. Robinson: We do whatever we can in these matters. The inspector was informed that the representation was on its way. Unfortunately, its delivery was delayed and it did not arrive on time. The hon. Gentleman's original letter was received by the Department only on 26 February, so time was short in any event. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are reviewing our arrangements to try to ensure that this sort of thing does not happen again.

Ogwr

7. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Wales why he refused to meet representatives from Ogwr borough council to discuss the proposed return of Ogwr's regional development status and of related matters.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: As has been explained in various letters sent to the borough's chief executive officer

by my office, there is no possibility of the assisted area map being revised so soon after the major changes of November 1984. In the circumstances, a meeting with representatives of the borough council to discuss a change in the status of Ogwr would not have served any useful purpose.

Mr. Powell: The Secretary of State will be aware that the council in its letter requested him or the Prime Minister to meet it, and it outlined the difficulties and problems in Ogwr borough. Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that there are 10,000 unemployed in the area and only 300 job vacancies? Every pit in the Ogmore and Ogwr borough area has been closed since the Governent came to office in 1979. Surely the right hon. Gentleman should have attended a meeting to discuss the problems which are besetting the coalfield area of Ogwr, or, in the interests of Ogwr, borough and its residents, prompted the Prime Minister, in the time that she is devoting to invest in stocks and shares, to attend such a meeting.

Mr. Edwards: I am aware of the problems of that borough. We were asked to meet to change the arrangements under which regional policy is administered, and we have made it clear that now is not the time to do that. We have, however, approved an urban programme allocation for 1986-87 which is more than double the allocation given to 1985-86. I have therefore met my commitment to the hon. Gentleman on that point. Since the review of regional policy carried out in 1984, offers of assistance totalling more than £2·5 million have been accepted in the Bridgend travel-to-work area. Those projects will create 500 new jobs and safeguard more than 100 existing jobs.

Rural Areas

8. **Mr. Best** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what guidance he gives to the Welsh Development Agency on the priority to be accorded to the rural areas of Wales in its various activities.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The Welsh Development Agency's corporate plan confirms its commitment to the development of rural areas. I have recently discussed with the agency and with Mid Wales Development a strengthening of their rural development packages in co-operation with the Wales Tourist Board. Details of these new arrangements are being announced separately today.

Mr. Best: Does my right hon. Friend accept that his answer will be warmly welcomed throughout rural areas in Wales, particularly in Anglesey, and by those of us who press consistently for greater assistance for rural areas within the WDA's remit? What resources will be made available following the initiative?

Mr. Edwards: The initiative includes a much better presentation of the very wide range of measures already available. It includes a new grant scheme — the development of rural initiative, venture and enterprise, known as DRIVE — which is being introduced to stimulate private sector investment and to which £1 million has been allocated over the next two years. The initiative also involves the Welsh Development Agency broadening its definition of rural areas, introducing a low interest rural loans group scheme — which is to be streamlined throughout Wales — and improving the eligibility for grants to convert redundant rural buildings.

Mrs. Clwyd: Does the Secretary of State recall 10 years ago describing the Welsh Development Agency as a Frankenstein monster and an extension of Bennery in Wales? Does he now regret those words, and does he agree that the WDA has, over the past 10 years, made a significant contribution to the economy in Wales?

Mr. Edwards: If the hon. Lady had paid attention to what I have said over the past 10 years, she would know that I have frequently stated that I opposed the introduction of the agency because I was afraid that it would be used as an instrument of Bennery. I have always freely acknowledged that it was not actually used in that way by my predecessors, and I have always been pragmatic in my desire to make the most effective use of the agency. I believe that that is what we have done since the Government have been in office.

Mr. Harvey: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the initiative will be warmly welcomed throughout rural areas of Wales? Will his Department consult Clwyd Fro in my constituency, which has extensive experience relevant to the proposed initiative?

Mr. Edwards: Yes, the Department will do that, particularly as our new initiative will have a number of pilot enterprise groups which are not dissimilar to the organisation that my hon. Friend has described. We are introducing these on an experimental basis to bring in the maximum expertise, experience and advice for people who are developing business and other initiatives in the countryside.

Mr. Foot: As the right hon. Gentleman has acknowledged one conversion about the WDA, may I encourage him to make another? Over the weekend he announced a number of increases in factory allocations, three of which are in my constituency. However, we need double that number to meet even our most elementary needs. How much extra money has he received from the Budget to carry out the kind of WDA programme needed in Wales?

Mr. Edwards: I shall bear that in mind when I next make my allocations. It is, however, absolutely characteristic of the right hon. Gentleman that, whenever he gets anything, he asks me to double it. We have properly considered and assessed the needs of his borough. I have approved proposals by the WDA to construct two 10,000 sq ft and one 25,000 sq ft advance factories at Rassau, and I believe that that is the immediate need. However, the right hon. Gentleman is wrong to make demands that are not based on current need. He believes that we should double everything, on the basis that if money is thrown and scattered around, that must do good, even though it is not based on a proper assessment of need.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Secretary of State aware that £500,000 a year will not solve the major problems of deprivation in many rural areas in Wales? In view of the initiative taken by the Development Commission in England to designate rural development areas so that they will be eligible for European regional development fund grants, can he give an assurance that in Wales, too, outside the Mid Wales Development area, rural development grants will be available through the ERDF as a result of his initiative?

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Gentleman picks on one sum of money as part of a package. The scheme that we have

introduced is an additional one, as I have made clear. We have sought to bring together the wide range of schemes that exist—the large amount of money that is being spent by the development agencies, the tourist board and the ERDF—in a coherent and cohesive package. The hon. Gentleman is wrong to write down the importance of that initiative.

Mr. Raffan: Will my right hon. Friend pass on to the WDA the thanks of the borough of Delyn for the funding that the agency has provided to prepare a No. 1 site at Greenfield for new factory units? At the same time, will he ask the agency to explore all possible means to provide advance factory units at Prestatyn where the unemployment rate is now almost as high as it is in Delyn?

Mr. Edwards: I note what my hon. Friend said, and I shall see that it is considered by the WDA.

Dr. Roger Thomas: There is a general welcome for the improvement and strengthening of the WDA's hand on rural areas, but has not the Mid Wales Development got a long lead for grants for rural areas in Wales? For too long we have had first and second-class rural areas. Would it not have been better to extend the boundaries of the Mid Wales Development?

Mr. Edwards: No. We considered carefully whether to extend the boundaries and we concluded that the best way to proceed was to improve the arrangements that the WDA can make under its already extensive powers and allow Mid Wales Development to concentrate on its task in the area that was designated by the previous Government. The two agencies working together with the Wales Tourist Board can put a coherent package together. I want to check on the position with regard to the ERDF and I shall write to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley).

Mr. Geraint Howells: May I ask the right hon. Gentleman one more question to clarify the financial position? How much extra financial aid will be given to the Development Board for Rural Wales, how much for the WDA and how much for the Wales Tourist Board?

Mr. Edwards: The announcement of the rural package does not affect the overall financial provision that has been made and is being announced in the usual way for the agencies. What is specific in the rural package is the new DRIVE scheme, for which £1 million has been allocated for a particular set of grants. As the hon. Gentleman is also aware, the total resources of the WDA do not come simply from grant, but from receipts, and they make up almost half the total. Therefore, it is the total budget that is available to the agencies that is important in considering the resources that can be devoted during a particular year.

Rate Precepts (County Councils)

9. **Sir Anthony Meyer** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the average increase in rate precepts by county councils in Wales this year.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: 22·9p, or 13·9 per cent.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is my right hon. Friend aware that that percentage would have been considerably higher, most notably in the county of Clwyd, had it not been for the firm way in which he handled the matter? Is he also aware that the present arbitrary and unpredictable methods of allocating Government support by way of rate support grant make it difficult for county councils to plan ahead and that if they cannot plan ahead it becomes correspondingly difficult for them to make economies?

Mr. Edwards: Bearing that in mind, I hope my hon. Friend will warmly support the measures for improving the system of local government finance that are contained in the consultative document that we have issued. It is because of the shortcomings in the existing system, which we freely acknowledge, that we are making major recommendations for reform.

Dr. Marek: Will the Secretary of State accept that his continuing policy of draconian grant hold-back and draconian grant penalties for councils which wish to provide proper services for their citizens will lead, certainly in the case of Clywd, to the closure of many primary schools in rural areas and to the county council having to cease providing nursery education in the county? That is the shameful result of his policies.

Mr. Edwards: I noticed with interest a report in the *Daily Post* headed "Too top-heavy with bosses". That article described reports that had been submitted by consultants to the Clywd county council which outlined the types of economies that could be made without leading to the consequences that the hon. Gentleman described. I suspect that, whatever the truth of that newspaper report, it is true that many improvements in efficiency can be made by the county council.

Sir Raymond Gower: Is my right hon. Friend aware that these huge increases are regarded with horror and dismay by industrialists, business men and small shopkeepers? It is a terrible burden to place on people who work in difficult areas.

Mr. Edwards: I wish that my hon. Friend had made that point absolutely clear to members of his own county council, the Labour-led county council, which has increased its rates precept by more than twice the rate of inflation. That is an increase for which I can see no possible jusitification.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Bearing in mind the social distress experienced throughout Wales at present—so much directly due to the policies of the Government—does the Secretary of State not realise that this is hardly the time to put our local authorities in a straitjacket? Why does he not accept that they have many additional problems and commitments, which they are trying to handle in a most responsible fashion?

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that this is a generous settlement for Wales, which allows for increases at least at the level of inflation. The people who are in the straitjackets are the unfortunate ratepayers, who are faced with demands which they cannot meet except by getting rid of employees or by increasing charges to their customers. That is the policy being advocated by the Labour Front Bench, and I hope that it is widely noted.

Alcohol Abuse

10. **Mr. Grist** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals his Department has for lessening alcohol abuse in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The Government's policy on measures to tackle alcohol abuse is outlined in the discussion document "Drinking Sensibly". The efforts of health educators, hostels and support groups such as local councils on alcoholism have been aided by the Welsh Office for several years. Recent developments include the establishment of Alcohol Concern Wales and the publication by the Health Education Advisory Committee for Wales of a report "Dealing with Alcohol Problems in Wales". I expect to receive the committee's final strategy shortly and I shall then consider what further action needs to be taken.

Mr. Grist: Does my hon. Friend agree that although, quite rightly, a great deal of attention has been directed to drug abuse and the growing threat that it poses, nevertheless the toll that alcohol takes in terms of broken families, misery, violence, murder and general social disorder is quite disgraceful and is often overlooked?

Mr. Robinson: We have had a programme to tackle alcohol misuse over a number of years. The problems of drug misuse are very different, in the sense that we have to take action to prevent the stuff from coming into the country and to prevent the situation from getting worse. That, of course, is expensive.

Housing Defects Act

11. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he intends to announce an uprating of the grant limits set under the Housing Defects Act.

Mr. Mark Robinson: It is clear that for some types of PRC houses the present eligible limit is adequate. There are categories where experience may prove this is not the case, and the limit will be kept under review.

Mr. Ron Davies: I do not think the Minister needs any more experience because about two years ago his colleague, the hon. Member for Conway (Mr. Roberts) wrote to me stating that he was fully aware of the problem and that the Welsh Office was keeping the matter under review. I put to him the specific problem of Woolaway homes. The excuse used so far by the Welsh Office is that there is no PRC licence scheme available. Will the Minister confirm that there is a PRC licence scheme now available and there is no reason other than the obduracy of the Welsh Office why the grant limit should not be increased? The attitude of the Welsh Office seems to be that it will monitor schemes and review the limit in an upward direction if it proves necessary. That is no good at all. Unless the limit is raised there is no prospect of any work being carried out.

Mr. Robinson: Reinstatement schemes have been introduced during the past two years. I can confirm that a scheme for Woolaway homes was approved on 3 March. As I have said, we continue to keep the expense limit under review in the light of experience. If the hon. Gentleman has evidence of such experience regarding Woolaway homes, I should be grateful if he would send it to me.

General Certificate of Education

12. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether his Department has had any discussions with the Welsh Joint Education Committee about the level of funding necessary to enable it to provide course materials for the new general certificate of secondary education for those children taking such examinations through the medium of the Welsh language in June 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The responsibility for co-ordinating the introduction of GCSE rests with the Secondary Examination Council, acting in conjuction with the Welsh Joint Education Committee in Wales, and there has therefore been no discussion between my Department and the WJEC on that subject.

The resourcing of individual schools, including the provision of course materials in Welsh, is a matter for local education authorities. However, following the Government's announcement on 13 March, an additional £1·18 million is being made available to Welsh local education authorities in 1986-87 and 1987-88 specifically for the provision of books and equipment for the GCSE.

A further £15,000—additional to the £45,000 already provided—is being made available in Wales for teacher training for the new examination, and we are actively considering another WJEC written request for £150,000 for further teacher training in 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Minister aware that, although the examination is generally welcomed, there is a real worry that teachers will not be trained in time to start the course in September this year? Gwynedd alone needs about £660,000 to launch the course. The money that has been made available is simply not adequate for the purpose. Will the Minister undertake to reconsider? Would it not be better to start the examination a year later than to make it a political football this year?

Mr. Roberts: The money that has been made available for training is precisely what the WJEC requested of us. Training is very much up to the teachers. In Gwynedd, they have not been assisted at all by head teachers preventing them from attending training courses. There will be further opportunities for them, however, including the two days before the end of the summer term.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Sunday Trading

22. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, if the commissioners will make it their policy that all new leases granted by them for commercial premises prohibit their use for trading on Sundays.

Sir William van Straubenezee The Second Church Estates Commissioner, Representing Church Commissioners: The Commissioners' standard form of lease provides that their shops should open
"during the normal business hours of the locality".
Should the current law be amended, the commissioners will consider the position.

Mr. Bruinvels: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is a distinct, although sad, possibility that Sunday trading will be upon us? Is it not incumbent on the Church Commissioners to give a lead to the rest of the country by inserting in the leases of new businesses a provision which prevents them from trading on Sundays? I appreciate that the Church Commissioners already hold £26 million-worth of shares in companies that are likely to trade on Sundays, but does my hon. Friend agree that the best way forward is to set such a

requirement to ensure that the Church Commissioners are whiter than the rest of the country and that new estates which are to open in Ipswich, Kingston, Birkenhead and Stockport do not trade on Sundays?

Sir William van Straubenzee: With respect to my hon. Friend, Sunday trading is with us, and has been for some time. That is not the issue. The issue is whether, in tidying up a wholly unsatisfactory law, the House should go as far as complete abolition. That matter goes wider than this question. As I have said, the Church Commissioners will consider the matter if and when the law is changed.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Since we last had questions on this subject, have the Church Commissioners also received representations from the public about Sunday opening? If so, what steps have they taken, or do they plan to take, or to make it clear on behalf of the interests that they represent that there is increasingly widespread anxiety at the Government's continuing intention not to change their original plans but to ensure that there is a complete derestriction of Sunday trading?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I am not aware, although I shall inquire, of any additional specific representations. If I am wrong on that, I shall inform the hon. Member. He is totally accurate in saying that the overwhelming view of the Church of England as a whole, to which the Church Commissioners have responded—it is for them that I answer—is hostile to the idea of the total abolition of trading restrictions.

Mr. Aitken: Is my hon. Friend aware that until recently the cathedral shop in the precincts of Canterbury cathedral was vigorously trading on Sundays by selling beer mats and other tourist knick-knacks? Would it not be wiser for the Church Commissioners to correct the beam on ecclesiastical premises before they try to correct the mote in commercial premises?

Sir William van Straubenzee: That is precisely why they did so. It came as a surprise to one or two senior dignitaries to discover that this practice was going on. I imagine that my hon. Friend discovered it because one of the books on sale is very useful in the purchase of beer.

Mr. Ryman: Does the hon. Gentleman appreciate that this is a far wider issue, and that if the Shops Bill were introduced and passed into law——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It cannot be wider than the new leases referred to in the question.

Mr. Ryman: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker. The principle arises from the specific question. The Auld report recognised the anomalies in the law, but would it not be monstrous if the Government used their majority to force the Shops Bill through the House in the face of widespread opposition from the trade unions, acting to protect their members, and the Christian community throughout the country, when it would wholly alter the character of a Sunday? Does the hon. Gentleman agree——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I gave the hon. Gentleman a good steer on that.

Mr. Ryman: I shall throw some leases in.

Sir William van Straubenzee: I am answering only about new leases as and when the law is changed. If it is changed, the matter will have to be reconsidered. Meanwhile, the views of the Church are well known, and, needless to say, I share them and associate myself with them.

Mr. Cormack: Before granting new leases, will my hon. Friend and his colleagues wait until the House has had time to deliberate? Does he agree that we do not want a high street Sunday, and therefore if the law as at present proposed is passed no new leases should be given to shops in high streets to trade on Sundays?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I shall gladly consider that, in the light of my hon. Friend's penetrating comments.

Clergy Stipends

23. **Mr. Greenway** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what account the Church Commissioners take, in calculating stipends, of congregational Easter offerings to the clergy; and if he will make a statement.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The level of individual clergy stipends is a diocesan matter. However, I can say that dioceses do take into account any Easter offerings paid direct to the clergyman when they assess the amount of augmentation grant to be paid.

Mr. Greenway: Is it not a fact that, throughout the land on Easter Sunday next, in accordance with ancient tradition, church people of all ages, including school-children, will be invited to make personal contributions to their incumbents? Will they not be distressed when they discover that those contributions do not go direct to the vicars, but are part of the stipends? Will the Church Commissioners, with their £1·7 billion assets, look again at this to see whether they can ensure that Easter offerings intended for vicars are paid to vicars?

Sir William van Straubenzee: In operating this policy the Church commissioners are responding to a strategy laid down in 1975 by the General Synod, which was designed essentially to have a greater element of fairness as between one incumbent and another. The laity of the Church have now overtaken the church Commissioners in providing their share of the stipends, while the Church Commissioners are wholly responsible for the money that is paid by way of pensions.

Women

24. **Mr. Dubs** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, how many of those for whose pay the Church Commissioners are responsible are women; and if he will break down these figures by category of employment.

Sir William van Straubenzee: There are 137 women on the commissioners' staff. The commissioners also contribute to the pay of 536 full and part-time deaconesses and female lay-workers and 100 women employed on the staffs of the archbishops and diocesan bishops. I have arranged to publish the full details in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Dubs: Does the hon. Gentleman realise that many women wish to take holy orders, but are debarred from doing so, and look with gratitude to the General Synod's

recent decision that women should be allowed to become deacons? Will the hon. Gentleman do all that he can to expedite that matter?

Sir William van Straubenzee: If I am entrusted with this issue, I shall do all that I can to place any necessary legislation before the House. The first measure will involve women as deacons, which is theologically quite distinct from women as priests. However, I have a feeling that the second measure will not fall to me during this Parliament.

Mr. Frank Field: As most of the money raised in parishes is raised by women, what weight should the House give to the view that there should be no taxation without representation when it comes to consider the measure concerning women deacons?

Sir William van Straubenzee: In accordance with tradition, I am sure that hon. Members will want to listen to representations from every side when that measure comes before the House. I am convinced of the arguments, but it is for the House to decide.

Following are the details:

	28 February 1986
Women on the Church Commissioners' Staff	
Administrative	71
Professional	5
Technical	61
	*137
Women in the Parochial and Diocesan Ministry (Towards whose pay the Commissioners contribute)	
Deaconesses (Full-time)	310
Deaconesses (Part-time)	55
Lay-workers (Full-time)	139
Lay-workers (Part-time)	32
	536
Women on the Staff of the Archbishops and Diocesan Bishops (Towards whose pay the Commissioners contribute)	
Secretaries	94
Others	6
	100

* 39 per cent. of the total.

"Faith in the City"

26. **Mr. Chapman** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what initiatives the Church Commissioners are taking to implement those recommendations in the report entitled "Faith in the City" which cover matters within the commissioners' responsibility.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The commissioners have offered to provide the secretariat for the proposed Church urban fund and they will give sympathetic consideration to the proposal that they should contribute £1 million per annum towards the fund. This, however, would require legislation.

Mr. Chapman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that information. In hindsight, and in view of what was written in "Faith in the City", is it not a pity that so many churches in the urban priority areas were demolished, as they were very much the focal points of their communities? Does the Church have any plans to have a physical presence once more in those areas?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I must question the assumption that my hon. Friend has made. To my certain knowledge every case of proposed demolition, whether in an urban area or elsewhere, is given most serious consideration from all points of view, including that of pastoral care. If my hon. Friend does not feel that that has happened in a specific case, I should be happy to look at the matter. However, in general, great care is taken.

THE ARTS

Local Government Reform

27. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Minister for the Arts if he intends to monitor the impact on the funding of the arts of the abolition of the Greater London council; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): I shall, of course, continue to take a close interest in the progress of the arts in the abolition areas, and I have confidence in their future.

Mr. Banks: Is the Minister aware that in the GLC's so-called spending spree, £4·6 million is earmarked for the arts in London? Indeed, this issue is the subject of a case at present being dealt with in the other place. Is the Minister prepared to use his good offices, as a member of the Tory party, to persuade Westminster to drop its pernicious action against the GLC? If he is not prepared to do so and the case goes against the GLC, will he put pressure on the London Residuary Body to ensure that that money goes to the Richmond scheme so that the arts in London benefit?

Mrs. Kellet-Bowman: Speech.

Mr. Banks: It was a better speech than the hon. Lady will ever make.

Mr. Luce: I note that the Court of Appeal has upheld Westminster city council's challenge as to the legality of the GLC's spending plans. I understand that the GLC has sought leave to appeal, and I cannot therefore comment on the court's decision. However, I must make the Government's position in general quite clear. We do not consider it appropriate that the GLC or the metropolitan county councils should, at this late stage, incur significant expenditure on new initiatives without the approval of the successor authorities. That is our position.

Mr. Jessel: Does my right hon. Friend agree that real art, which excites, inspires, uplifts and enriches people's lives can be greatly benefited by a budget, whereas the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and his friends on the GLC gave a significant part of their budget for the promotion of degrading and decadent rubbish?

Mr. Luce: I agree with my hon. Friend. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) should end his obsession with the past and look with a bit more optimism to the exciting things that can happen in future in the Greater London area. I also agree with my hon. Friend that the tax relief that is to be provided for single gifts to charities by companies will make a positive

contribution to the arts. Arts organisations should now go out and try to persuade businesses to give them their support.

Mr. Buchan: Does the Minister recognise that if it were not for the malevolent and foolish actions of both his Government and Westminster council the GLC would now be able to save some of the arts described by the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel)? The GLC could come to the rescue of the Victoria and Albert museum in the same way as it came to the rescue of the Cottesloe theatre. Will the Minister fill the place of the GLC? Will he give the proper funds to the Victoria and Albert to repair the damage caused by the flood?

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman mentioned Westminster council. It should be strongly praised for agreeing to provide £3 million for the arts in the Greater London area. If other councils, such as Islington borough council, followed the Westminster example we would make some progress. I have a great deal of sympathy, as I am sure does the whole House, for Sir Roy Strong and his staff, who have done a magnificent job over the weekend following the tragic accident at the museum. I and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) will, immediately after Question Time, go to the Victoria and Albert to see the scale of the damage and to discuss the situation with Sir Roy Strong. We are considering whether there should be an inquiry. This accident occurred because of leakage from a temporary joint on water piping. It is against that background that we are considering an inquiry.

Sir David Price: Does my right hon. Friend agree that dealing with the flooding of the Victoria and Albert on Saturday is the most urgent artistic problem in London? On his visit today he will carry with him the full support of the House and will go in the knowledge that if he wishes to ask for extra money to fund the repairs the House will view the request sympathetically.

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As I say, in the next hour or so I will see the full extent of the damage. I take full account of what my hon. Friend has said.

28. **Mr. Chris Smith** asked the Minister for the Arts what assessment he has made of the impact on the 1986-87 funding position of arts' organisations in Islington of the abolition of the Greater London council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 10 February about Sadler's Wells theatre, for which the prospects are now good. Discussions continue between the Arts Council and Islington borough council about the funding of other arts bodies in the borough.

Mr. Smith: Is the Minister aware that among the many valued theatrical institutions in the borough of Islington is the Almeida theatre? Is he also aware that many theatregoers, not just from Islington but from the whole of London, are greatly worried about the threat to that theatre? Will he make sure that the Arts Council looks favourably at future funding of the Almeida theatre, and will he also make representations to his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to ensure that before insisting that Islington council picks up the bill, it is not ratecapped?

Mr. Luce: Like other borough councils, Islington has been relieved of the rate precept and the bill that it had to pay for the arts from the GLC. That will apply in the coming year. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the Almeida theatre is extremely good and has a high reputation. For that reason, it is not unreasonable to look to Islington borough council to play its part. On 2 April the Arts Council will announce its budgets for all those areas where borough councils have agreed to co-operate. The Islington council has not agreed to co-operate, but I hope that it will reconsider its position.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, since the Budget, the debate on funding for the arts has to be conducted in new terms, and that arts organisations which have been accustomed to look to central and local government for funding should look also for tax-favoured charitable donations? We on the Tory Benches offer our warmest congratulations to the Minister and to the Government on a creative initiative which will release significant additional sums for the arts.

Mr. Luce: I strongly acknowledge the role that my hon. Friend has played and the strong views that he has expressed in previous months. I am convinced that the Budget measures will transform the arts climate and encourage still further the amount of giving, not only to charitable bodies, but to the arts world. I hope that all hon. Members will do their utmost to persuade businesses and, later, individuals to give to the arts.

Mr. Buchan: Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that, not only in Islington, but in the surrounding boroughs of London and in the metropolitan counties, it is a sick joke to suggest that they have the moneys to replace the missing funding? There are at least half a dozen extremely important and major artistic events in Islington, including theatres. Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that his predecessor gave a pledge that the arts would not suffer and that the money would be replaced? Quite apart from what the right hon. Gentleman expects of the boroughs, will he fulfil that pledge?

Mr. Luce: We have clear evidence, not only in Greater London, but outside London, that all these issues are being tackled sensitively and properly one by one. There are already agreements on these matters in Greater Manchester, Tyne and Wear and other areas. Only a few district council successor authorities are holding back the prospects of a sensible settlement. Islington borough council still has not made a clear decision. Other borough councils, including Hammersmith and Westminster, have agreed, and their lead should be followed.

Wales

29. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Minister for the Arts when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Welsh Arts Council to discuss the funding of the arts in Wales.

Mr. Luce: Mr. Mathew Pritchard has recently been appointed to be chairman of the Welsh Arts Council, and I hope to meet him as soon as a date can be arranged.

Mr. Wigley: When the right hon. Gentleman meets Mr. Prichard, will he take up with him the position of the Welsh National Opera, which said last week that it could be £500,000 in debt by this time next year because the funding was not sufficient to cover inflation? Will the right

hon. Gentleman look at the recent reports of the Arts Council of Great Britain on the allocation of resources to opera to ascertain whether any of those resources could be directed towards the Welsh National Opera to alleviate the position?

Mr. Luce: I am in no doubt that when I meet Mr. Prichard we shall discuss these and other matters. I should point out that the budget for the Welsh Arts Council for the coming financial year is being increased by 6·6 per cent. That is a positive contribution. I have already visited the Welsh Arts Council in Wales. It is doing an excellent job. Of course, I shall discuss the issue of the Welsh National Opera, which has a strong national as well as international reputation.

Mr. Best: Will my right hon. Friend discuss with Mr. Prichard the funding of Opera Gogledd Cymru, which is a new venture to enable young people to train for a future operatic career, which will give the people of north Wales an opportunity to see superb opera?

Mr. Luce: As my hon. Friend has raised this matter with me, I shall, of course, mention it in my discussions. I must point out, however, that it is for the Welsh Arts Council to decide how to disburse the money. The important point is that I have increased the amount by 6·6 per cent. for the coming financial year.

Evelyn Glenholmes

3.32 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the recent regrettable failure to secure the extradition of Evelyn Glenholmes from the Republic of Ireland.

Nine endorsed warrants for the return of Miss Glenholmes were first issued on 31 October 1984 and submitted to the Irish authorities for endorsement in accordance with the United Kingdom-Irish extradition legislation. The offences covered by the warrants related to various terrorist offences committed between 1981 and 1982, including murder, attempted murder, firearms and explosives offences. The original warrants were returned by the Irish authorities, who asked for some technical changes to be made to their wording. Fresh warrants were accordingly submitted on 6 November 1984, but by that time details of the extradition request had been disclosed in the press and Miss Glenholmes disappeared from view.

Miss Glenholmes was later arrested in Dublin on 12 March 1986, and the hearing of the extradition request opened in the district court of Dublin last Wednesday on the basis of the warrants issued in November 1984.

Throughout last week's court hearing there was close co-operation between the Irish prosecuting authorities and officers from the Metropolitan police and the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

On Saturday morning, having heard submissions from defence counsel that the extradition warrants were defective, the court discharged Miss Glenholmes. I understand that the principal consideration which underlay the court's decision was that, whereas the standard wording printed on the warrants referred to information on oath as having been laid on the day the warrants were issued — which was 6 November 1984 — the court considered that the relevant information was that laid when the original warrants had been issued on 31 October 1984. I understand that the magistrate in London treated the further application on 6 November as having been made under oath adopting the information already laid but not resworn. The information required for both sets of warrants was identical, but was not sworn again on 6 November, which could have avoided the difficulty which later arose.

Even before Miss Glenholmes was released, the United Kingdom authorities had made arrangements for the issue of a fresh warrant covering one of the charges of murder. On the basis of this fresh warrant, the Garda obtained a new provisional warrant for Miss Glenholmes' arrest. Once she had been rearrested, she was brought back to the district court. I understand the Miss Glenholmes was then released, this time on the grounds that the court was not satisfied, in spite of a telephone call from New Scotland Yard to the Garda, that there was evidence that a fresh warrant had been issued in London that morning or that Miss Glenholmes had in effect been at liberty between her earlier release and her rearrest.

Following Miss Glenholmes' second release, the fresh warrant was sent to Dublin this morning. Earlier today additional warrants were sent covering the eight remaining charges and will be sent to the authorities in Dublin later today.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General and I have looked carefully at the information so far available to us. On the basis of that information, it is clear that the extradition application failed because of a technical objection taken by the Dublin court. My right hon. and learned Friend and I regret that this technical objection was not foreseen in time and fresh warrants obtained. We are considering urgently the need for a review of procedures and the handling of this sort of case. My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has instructed the Directors of Public Prosecutions for England and Wales, and for Northern Ireland, to ensure personally that all outstanding warrants in respect of terrorist offences are checked at once for accuracy and sufficiency. Under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Conference, work has already begun on a range of legal matters relating to extradition; and lessons of the past few days will be studied in that context.

For the sake of completeness, I should also inform the House that our inquiries have shown that in giving evidence to the court in Dublin an officer from the Metropolitan police made an error in referring to the dates on which the warrants were issued. I understand that he sought to correct this error but that an opportunity for him to do so was not forthcoming. This does not, however, appear to have influenced the court in its decision to release Miss Glenholmes.

It is deeply disappointing that it has not so far proved possible to obtain the extradition of Miss Glenholmes to face justice in a British court. It is essential that we all learn the right lessons for the future from this failure.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): That statement still leaves a number of extremely important questions to be answered. Will the Home Secretary confirm that throughout this lamentable episode the Irish authorities have behaved with complete propriety and that the Irish Government have fulfilled all their obligations?

We are told that Evelyn Glenholmes is Scotland Yard's most wanted suspect for alleged terrorist offences. In the light of the fact that the extradition of Brendan Burns failed through errors relating to warrants, and the further fact that two prior sets of warrants were prepared for Evelyn Glenholmes, one of which was found in the Irish courts to be faulty, not just technically — and the Home Secretary does himself no credit by harping on technicalities when matters of substance are involved — but in at least one serious material respect, and the second one withdrawn by the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions when found to be faulty, why was this third and crucial error permitted? Why were these warrants permitted to go forward without being meticulously checked? Why, during the nearly 18 months that were available, were the warrants not rechecked for accuracy? The Home Secretary says that they were originally checked with the Irish authorities, were found wanting and were corrected, but the right hon. Gentleman does not point out that the new ones — the allegedly corrected ones — also turned out to be faulty. Why were they not cleared in advance for accuracy and technical probity with the Irish legal authorities?

Who was in charge of this process in the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions? Is it true, as alleged, that this matter was dealt with at a junior level? Is it true, as further alleged, that other warrants that were sent to Ireland on other matters have also been found to be

[Mr. Gerald Kaufman]

defective? The Home Secretary says that new warrants in the Evelyn Glenholmes' case have now been issued. Is he sure that they are in order this time?

Mr. Dukes, the Irish Minister of Justice, said yesterday that after the court adjourned on Friday in Dublin further information and clarification were sought from the British authorities at that stage but, Mr. Dukes said:

"We were not able to get it."

What is the explanation for that serious lapse?

Why did an official from the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions then go to Dublin? What was his purpose? What did he achieve? What was the purpose of the telephone call referred to by the Home Secretary that was made to Dublin from a chief inspector of the Metropolitan police? What was that meant to achieve? Could the Home Secretary say how a British court would have responded to such a telephone call on a serious extradition case? Above all, taking into account the important and sensitive issues at stake, why did not the Director of Public Prosecutions ensure that he himself, or a high official, supervised meticulously all stages of the procedures? Why did not the Attorney-General, who is answerable to this House, take care to satisfy himself that the necessary procedures had been precisely observed?

The Home Secretary calmly tells us this afternoon that now, when the horse has bolted, there is to be a careful inspection of the stable. That is not good enough. A full inquiry is essential. It is also essential that those at the very top accept responsibility, are disciplined and, if necessary, are removed from the offices that they hold.

This disquieting episode has created serious difficulties for the Irish authorities in their determination to co-operate with this country over the delicate issue of extradition. What is more, the scenes on television have given the IRA a gratuitous propaganda triumph. Slackness, incompetence and complacency have brought about this discreditable botch up. May we have an absolute assurance that steps will now be taken to ensure that nothing like this can ever happen again?

Mr. Hurd: I confirm that we have no criticism of the co-operation that we have received in this matter from the Irish authorities. I am glad of the opportunity to make that clear.

In response to the right hon. Gentleman's second point, the difficulty on which this case foundered on Saturday was a technical difficulty. I think that my statement made that clear. It was concerned with the question whether, when a second and revised warrant was sought from the same magistrate, the identical information which was laid when obtaining the first warrant needed to be laid under oath all over again. Whatever view one takes of it, that is a technical point. As I said in my statement, I believe that a great deal of trouble could have been avoided if that had been foreseen and acted upon in the autumn of 1984.

The second set of warrants which were held to be defective on Saturday were given to the Irish authorities and no objection or criticism was raised on them. However, I think that it is fair to add that it would not have been reasonable to expect the Irish authorities to have spotted the particular point on which the court in Dublin found the warrant to be defective on Saturday. But the warrants were available to the Irish authorities for their comments.

I am advised that it is perfectly normal in these circumstances for news of the issue of a fresh warrant to be conveyed, either way, by a telephone conversation between the police forces concerned. That has happened before, and I understand that it is normal. It happened on this occasion, although it was not accepted by the court for the reasons I have given. I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that it is essential that we find ways, through the Anglo-Irish conference and in other ways, to ensure that such difficulties do not recur.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Is there not a high duty resting on the Director of Public Prosecutions in all cases of extradition warrants to ensure that those warrants are validly and properly prepared? Is not that duty even greater when we are dealing with a matter of the gravest importance such as terrorism on a massive scale of which the person concerned is suspect? Is my right hon. Friend able to assure the House that the warrants taken to Dublin this morning have been seen and approved by the appropriate legal authorities in Dublin and that he has received an assurance that the new warrants sent over today are in order?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with the first part of my hon. Friend's comments. It is our responsibility to ensure that warrants of this kind are in a form which arms them against all possible difficulties and criticisms, whether of a substantial or technical kind. The new warrant and the other warrants which I mentioned being sent to Dublin today are identical to those previously sent, with the crucial exception that the information concerned has been relaid before the magistrate concerned.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): Has it occurred to the Government that the incompetence of those acting on their behalf in the matter of extradition may have been exceeded by the incompetence of those who negotiated the Anglo-Irish agreement and who advised the Government to enter into it?

Mr. Hurd: I anticipated that the right hon. Gentleman would raise that point. However, I do not think that he has proved its relevance to the matter we are discussing.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Since my right hon. Friend has reasonably pointed out that there is no relevance to the Anglo-Irish agreement in this unhappy matter, it is not the case that the commendable and exceptional exertions of the Garda Siochana, to which I pay tribute, have no connection with that agreement either?

Mr. Hurd: As I said in my response to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), we have no criticism of the behaviour of the Irish Government or of their agencies, including the Garda, in that respect. Therefore, I associate myself with what my hon. Friend has said. The relevance of the Anglo-Irish agreement is that discussions are taking place under article 8 of the agreement to review procedures. Obviously the lessons of this event will be relevant to those discussions.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Surely the purpose of a statement in this House is to enable us to question the responsible Minister. The Home Secretary is not responsible for extradition warrants and he is not responsible for the Director of Public Prosecutions. We should be questioning the Attorney-General. The Opposition will have to take the matter further.

In any event, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that this is not the only example of a defective extradition warrant recently? It was brought to my notice by the chief constable of Yorkshire on Friday that a defective warrant was served on a man called Anthony Kelly, who is wanted for questioning for 18 armed robberies and the murder of a Leeds policeman. Will the right hon. Gentleman use his powers as Home Secretary to tell the Attorney-General that when the warrant is served again we in Yorkshire will want better results?

Mr. Hurd: The matter concerns the police and the prosecuting authorities in this country, so it seems sensible that I should make the statement today. No doubt the right hon. Gentleman will have ample opportunities for asking questions of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General if he wishes to do so. [HON. MEMBERS: "When?"] I do not doubt that there will be opportunities.

I refer to the case that the right hon. Gentleman mentioned. The gentleman concerned, Mr. Kelly, is serving a sentence of imprisonment in the Republic for offences committed in the Republic. Perhaps, therefore, we are not at the end of that story.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Would it not have been unthinkable for a British court not to have granted a reasonable adjournment when such a technicality arose —particularly one which emerged only in the course of cross-examination—and which must have been known to the Irish authorities and thought by them to be utterly unimportant?

Mr. Hurd: I do not want to get drawn into that. It is true that those concerned on our behalf asked for an adjournment and the court did not grant it. My hon. and learned Friend and his colleagues will be able to judge whether a British court would have taken a different decision.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): In dealing with this extraordinary example of sloppy, incompetent professional negligence, will the Home Secretary tell us whether in future we are to regard the failure by a court to administer an oath as a mere technicality? Why in a case as serious as this did not the Director of Public Prosecutions personally examine the warrants before they were sent to Ireland?

Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us why the mistake was not corrected properly before Saturday morning, and whether anybody will take responsibility for this shambles in the way that he should?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. and learned Gentleman misunderstood the point that was at issue. It was a question not simply whether the information was on oath, but whether the information needed to be relaid, although it was identical to the information that had been provided on oath a week before. That is the point. I maintain that it is a technical point.

The Director of Public Prosecutions is responsible for the conduct of that office, and for the extent to which he delegates to senior advisers and officials the handling of particular cases. The organisation of that office is, of course, a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): Far from this sorry affair being used as a criticism of the Anglo-Irish agreement, does not my right hon. Friend agree that it is a reason for those involved to try harder to make absolutely certain that the co-operation that was begun three months ago becomes more effective so that this sort of incident will not be repeated? Will he specifically ensure that those responsible get together in a working party specifically to make sure that this sort of misunderstanding will never happen again?

Mr. Hurd: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. That is exactly what is happening. Of course, as right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House know, this process has always been a subject of extraordinary difficulty and complication, and the failure in this case is simply a further illustation of that fact. I do not complain about the criticisms that have been made this afternoon, but that is an argument not for despairing of that process but for continuing strenuously with it.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy: (Sheffield, Attercliffe): The Home Secretary persists in trying to minimise the incompetence of those responsible by putting forward legal objections when he is really dealing with due process. Is he not aware that this is the fourth major embarrassment in extradition cases with the Irish Government in the past two years because of blunders and inadequate presentation of cases by the British and Northern Ireland authorities? Why has it suddenly become so difficult in London to prepare an adequate legal presentation?

Mr. Hurd: As I said in my last answer, this is an area which has proved to be difficult over the years. This is the latest example of it. I maintain — I think that my statement bears it out—that the difficulty on which this case fell was essentially a technical one and not one of principle.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): Is there not a very painful contrast between the detailed, careful, and often dangerous work by the police service of the Irish Republic, of the Metropolitan police and of the RUC in obtaining the necessary information, sometimes at the risk of their lives, and the comparatively slipshod and careless way in which the matter was dealt with in the Director of Public Prosecution's office? Who precisely was responsible in the DPP's office for establishing the sufficiency and accuracy of the warrants? What hope does my right hon. Friend hold out of bringing this most wanted person to justice in the near future?

Mr. Hurd: It would be neither customary nor in order to give the names of officials. The structure of responsibility is clear. It is through the Director of Public Prosecutions to my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Since this statement is principally about the DPP's office, since on a number of occasions the Home Secretary has said that this is a matter for his right hon. and learned Friend and since he has sometimes said "I am advised" after the Attorney-General has whispered the answer in his ear, why is the Home Secretary making the statement and not the Attorney-General?

Mr. Hurd: If the hon. Gentleman had been listening to my reply to the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) he would have realised—[HON MEMBERS: "Answer."] I did answer the question. I explained that the matter which is the subject of the

[Mr. Hurd]

statement covers part of the area of my responsibility—that is, the police and the general conduct of policy against terrorism—and partly a matter which falls within my right hon. and learned Friend's responsibility, that is, the DPP's office. Since we could not both make the statement, one of us had to, and the lot fell to me.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Although my right hon. Friend and his Department are not directly responsible, does my right hon. Friend agree that the degree of incompetence involved is such that there must be the most searching inquiry into the way that these issues are handled to ensure that a proper administrative machine is put into place so that this does not happen again?

Mr. Hurd: I agree.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Is not the essence of the matter that the Home Secretary has attempted to suggest to the House that this is a matter of extraordinary complexity and that he has tried to weave a web to protect those responsible? Is not the reality that which is set out in the Government's Green Paper on extradition last February which described extradition by warrant as a "comparatively simple and expeditious procedure"? In the light of the evidence of the Director of Public Prosecutions' inability to manage such a comparatively simple and expeditious procedure, should he not resign, or, if not he, the Attorney-General?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that that is fair of the hon. Gentleman. The advantage of the procedure which we follow with the Republic is that it avoids some of the difficulties involved in our other extradition legislation, in particular the prima facie case which the House might be asked to consider next Session. It should be a comparatively straightforward procedure, but that assumes that everybody on both sides is armed effectively against the procedural difficulties, whether of substance or technical. That did not happen in this case.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): May I ask my right hon. Friend not to accept too readily that there has been any incompetence on the part of the DPP or his staff? If true reciprocity existed, as it should, the document would not necessarily have been ruled defective. Given the nature of the technical objection, would it not have been sufficient in this country for the court to adjourn the case for consideration before making an announcement on the application and thus releasing into the community a notorious wanted criminal? In these circumstances, should we not address our criticism to the spirit with which the Dublin court operated this business?

Mr. Hurd: I hope that the House has noted carefully the point which my hon. Friend has made with his experience of these matters. Choosing my words with care, and as I have already said in answer to an earlier question, I think that it would have been possible for the court to take a different decision on the request for an adjournment.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): As the House is clearly quite dissatisfied with the answers given by the Home Secretary, will the right hon. Gentleman make representations to the Leader of the House that a statement should be made to the House tomorrow by the Attorney-General?

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will have noted that request. As I have said, there are ample opportunities to put questions to my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General on aspects of the matter which concern him especially. There are wider aspects, however, and several of the questions which have been addressed to me have covered them. I repeat that I think that it was entirely right that I should make the statement.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my right hon. Friend deplore the irresponsible attempts of a vociferous minority to use this regrettable incident as a means of denigrating the Anglo-Irish agreement?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, Sir.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): Normally the standard of professional work of the Director of Public Prosecutions is extremely high, so why was it that the revised warrant of 6 November 1984 was not sworn? What was the reason for not taking the step of swearing that warrant? It contained revised facts and was amended to an extent that made it obvious that it had to be sworn again to conform with the law.

Mr. Hurd: The magistrate did not so require.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Instead of merely showing the second lot of warrants to the Dublin legal authorities, would it not have been more sensible specifically to have asked the authorities whether the documents were in order? After all, the Dublin authorities should know more about Irish law than we do. Does my right hon. Friend agree that they should have been just as keen as the British authorities to bring criminals to justice? Also, has my right hon. Friend noted the apparent glee with which some Opposition Members have greeted the escape of a notorious criminal? Whose side are they on?

Mr. Hurd: The revised warrants were available to and shown to the Irish authorities, and they raised no comment or objection to them on the ground of Irish law. As I have already said to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton, (Mr. Kaufman), it would not have been fair or reasonable to expect the Irish authorities to spot the technical defect——

Mr. Stanbrook: Why not?

Mr. Hurd: This involved the relaying of information between one week and another in this country. It would not be fair to expect the Irish authorities to spot the alleged defect, which was thought to be decisive by the court.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Since Scotland Yard is blameless in this matter, although the Home Secretary made an adverse comment on a Metropolitan officer, why has he been put up to protect the Attorney-General, whose responsibility the Director of Public Prosecutions comes under, and who should be making the statement and who should now proceed in any case, after this series of errors, to dismiss Sir Thomas Hetherington?

Mr. Hurd: I have answered that question twice. The hon. Gentleman will excuse me for not attempting to do so a third time.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Nottingham, North): Will my right hon. Friend explain why the Irish courts were not satisfied that a new warrant was issued for the second hearing on Saturday afternoon?

Mr. Hurd: I sought to explain that. There were two reasons, and I do not wish to comment on them particularly. One reason, as has been mentioned already, was whether it is sufficient evidence of a new warrant having been provided that the news of that warrant is communicated by telephone between police forces. I gather that that is normal practice, but it was not accepted by the court.

The second question was directed to Irish law, on which I am not competent. The issue raised was whether the release of Miss Glenholmes on that morning was, in effect, a release to liberty under Irish law.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Are there to be any resignations or any disciplinary action at any level in the department concerned, or does nobody take any responsibility for anything any more?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman could have listened to what I said in my statement on that issue. Both my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General and I regretted the failure in this case, and that was stated specifically in my original statement. The internal arrangements of the office of the Director are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): Can my right hon. Friend tell the House what sanctions are available to Ministers when they are convinced of the incompetence of public servants?

Mr. Hurd: They vary, but they exist.

Mr. Kaufman: The House is clearly highly dissatisfied with the Home Secretary's faltering attempts to answer the basic points that have been raised. The right hon. Gentleman harps on the alleged technicality of the failure on Saturday, but the magistrate who signed the warrant signed it "Sworn this day" when it was not sworn that day. Was that statement, which was palpably untrue, merely a technicality? Above all, the right hon. Gentleman has not told the House who was responsible. Who was he seeking to shield by himself making this statement? Was it the Director of Public Prosecutions? Was it the silent Attorney-General? Or, in accordance with the Government's style, will no one accept responsibility for this almighty mess?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is repetitive. As I said in my statement, my right hon. and learned Friend and I have expressed our regret that this occurred. Therefore, we accept our share of the responsibility; and that, I think, is what the right hon. Gentleman would expect.

The point at issue was whether identical information which had been laid under oath on one day was required to be laid under oath on a second day before the same magistrate. The magistrate did not so require and it was not done. It is clear that if it had been done this particular difficulty would have been avoided, although everyone who has studied the case knows that even then there were further difficulties further down the road.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, despite the opportunist and derogatory response of the Opposition, he and my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General continue to enjoy the confidence of the House and the country for the way in which they discharge their responsibilities to hound terrorists and to bring them to book?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that my right hon. and learned Friend and I expected that a statement on this subject would be received with enthusiasm, and I do not wish to understate the importance of this failure. I have tried to be open with the House about exactly what happened. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he has said.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the disquiet on both sides of the House about the role of the Director of Public Prosecutions and his office, may we expect a statement tomorrow from the Attorney-General, the Minister responsible, on the reorganisation that he has effected of the director's office for the avoidance of further difficulties, technical or otherwise?

Mr. Speaker: That patently is not a matter for me.

Auxiliary Oil Replenishment Vessel (Order)

4.9 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the Royal Navy's order for the auxiliary oil replenishment lead vessel."

The matter is urgent because an announcement is about to be made placing the order at Harland and Wolff in spite of the representations made at the weekend by Swan Hunter to the Ministry of Defence and in spite of the representations made by myself and by my hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) when we met the Prime Minister last Thursday.

The decision should be delayed before such a disastrous course is embarked upon to allow Parliament the opportunity to consider the strategic issues involved. Is it Parliament's wish that privately owned warship yards—such as Swan Hunter — should compete against the massive public subsidies—£37 million last year—which have been given to Harland and Wolff? As there is enough work for both yards, why will the Government not place the order for the lead vessel at Swan Hunter and the order for the follow-on vessel at Harland and Wolff? Harland's has work until 1987 but Swan Hunter's has a shortfall. Why should the people of Tyneside have to accept a further 2,000 redundancies, which would give that area the highest level of unemployment in the country, including Northern Ireland, as the price for the Anglo-Irish agreement?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the Royal Navy's order for the AOR lead vessel."

I have listened with great concern to what the hon. Member has said, but I must say that I do not consider the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. I cannot therefore submit his application to the House, but I hope that he will find other ways of raising the matter.

Evelyn Glenholmes

4.12 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the failure of the Director of Public Prosecutions to secure the extradition from the Republic of Ireland of Evelyn Glenholmes, suspected of the gravest terrorist offences, despite the Anglo-Irish agreement of 15 November 1985."

This matter is clearly specific and relates to events which are within the knowledge of the House, which took place as recently as last Saturday. It is undoubtedly important. You have heard, Mr. Speaker, the deep concern expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House about the statement made by right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

The matter is also urgent. You will have noticed, Mr. Speaker, that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary did not answer the third question that I put to him this afternoon, and say whether he had satisfied himself that, in the view of the Irish legal authorities, the third warrant sent over this morning to Dublin did conform, and conform in every respect, with the legal requirements of Irish law so that there could be, if Miss Glenholmes should be apprehended, a proper extradition of the kind that was attempted twice on Saturday.

There is a third aspect which I would like to draw to your attention, Mr. Speaker. Our proceedings this afternoon take place four months after the signing of the Anglo-Irish agreement. On 11 March, less than a fortnight ago, there was a meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference at ministerial level. I wish to remind you, Mr. Speaker, of what took place as recorded in the official communiqué:

"The Conference welcomed the development of contacts between officials concerned with security questions, and the plans for these contacts to continue."

Later in that communiqué it states:

"The conference heard a report of the meeting held on 13 February to discuss legal matters including the administration of justice."

The communiqué also stressed that:

"The Conference agreed that at its next meeting it would consider . . . progress reports from the groups of officials set up under Article 8 of the Agreement to discuss extradition."

It is clear that the matters which were the subject of the terrible events in Dublin on Saturday, and which were the subject of my right hon. Friend's statement this afternoon, were also considered at the last meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference.

The House is about to rise for the Easter recess. There is no other opportunity, save through an emergency debate, for us to discuss these matters which are so clearly of importance to the House. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to agree to an emergency debate.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The extradition from the Republic of Ireland of Evelyn Glenholmes, suspected of the gravest terrorist offences, despite the Anglo-Irish agreement of 15 November 1985."

I have listened, as has the whole House, to what the hon. Gentleman has said and I listened, of course, to the

earlier exchanges on the statement. I regret that I do not consider that the matter he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Courtaulds Clothing Ltd., Seaforth

4.16 pm

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The threatened closure of the factory, Courtaulds Clothing Ltd. at Seaforth in my constituency."

This is a specific matter because on Friday the whole work force of 220 people was called into the canteen and given 90 days' notice of the closure of the factory. Of that work force, 58 per cent. are women and the sole breadwinners in their homes and 57 per cent. are under 21 years of age and in their first real job.

It is urgent because the House, by debating the issue, can prevent the closure of this viable factory which makes clothes for such companies as Mothercare and Marks and Spencer. It is urgent because the factory has a full order book and is being closed only for reasons of internal politics at Courtaulds. An urgent debate is needed because the work force has issued a statement saying that it will consider any method of non-violent, direct action to secure the future of their jobs and prosperity.

The House must ensure that the company opens the books to the work force and that, if Courtaulds does not want to continue to operate that factory, a workers' co-operative is able to do so in co-operation with the companies for which the factory now produces goods. The issue is especially urgent because it is happening on Merseyside, where unemployment is at its highest ever and already running at 30 per cent. in Bootle and Seaforth. If the redundancy notices stand, the highly flexible, skilled work force is likely to be on the dole for some considerable time.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The proposed closure of the Courtaulds factory at Seaforth in the constituency of Bootle."

I regret that I must give the hon. Member the same answer that I gave to the other hon. Members making Standing Order No. 10 applications. I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and I cannot therefore submit his application to the House, but I hope that he will find other methods of raising the matter, which is of concern to his constituents.

Prime Minister (Share Dealings)

4.19 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"Prime ministerial conflict of interests in relation to share dealings."

The matter is specific, Mr. Speaker, because it refers to the head of the Government in the United Kingdom dealing in shares from 10 Downing street and using that building as an arm of the stock exchange.

It is also specific because it has always been generally understood in the House that, like councillors and others who represent the public in matters of accountability, Government Ministers, including the Prime Minister, do not become involved in dealing in shares because they are privy to inside information that the ordinary public does not have. In these days of privatisation, there have been countless instances when the Government and the Prime Minister have been and were privy to such information and could have made millions.

The matter is important because there is a conflict of interests. It is not right and proper that in these days of massive speculation on the stock exchange, when the *Financial Times* index has gone through the 1,400 barrier, we should dismiss lightly the fact that a Prime Minister has been dealing in shares.

The matter is important because No. 10 Downing street does not belong to the Prime Minister but to the nation, and it is used for Cabinet meetings every week. It is also used for Budgets, and announcements are made by the Prime Minister and many other Ministers with advance information that could lead to a lot of money being made by a lot of people. That is why it has been generally agreed over the years that Ministers and Prime Ministers do not become involved in speculation. The matter is also important because it is set against a backcloth of City fraud that has been unsurpassed in these many years. I do not have to go further down that road.

The matter is also important because of the public disquiet about it and because many people — I am among them — believe that there should be a full and independent public inquiry into the whole matter so that the people can judge for themselves.

The matter is urgent because it has occurred since the House last met on Friday and because the Prime Minister has refused to come to the House today, as she should have done, to make a Prime Ministerial statement to explain the matter. It is also urgent because the Committee considering the Financial Services Bill is meeting upstairs and one of its jobs is to clear up the question of conflict of interests as it applies to people in the City of London and Ministers.

The matter is important, urgent and specific. We might have gone to the Director of Public Prosecutions but we have no faith in him.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing an important and specific matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"Prime ministerial conflict of interests relating to share dealings."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Mr. Skinner: It will not go away.

Parliamentary Language

4.22 pm

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. On Thursday, during exchanges between the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. Member for Islington, North suggested that some hon. Members might be persuaded not to take up immigration cases because they were racist. Such language is unparliamentary, and I would invite you, Mr. Speaker, to ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw that allegation. I raised the matter with you on Thursday and you informed me that you had not heard that remark. I must inform you that *Hansard* did, and it appears in the official record.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice of his point of order. As I said on Thursday, I did not hear that remark. Indeed, I do not think that many did, because the matter was not raised with me at the time. However, as the hon. Gentleman said, it is now printed in *Hansard*. I repeat what I said on Thursday and add that in the words of "Erskine May":

"Good temper and moderation are the characteristics of parliamentary language"

I hope that we shall conduct our debates on that high plane.

BILL PRESENTED

SEXUAL OFFENCES ACT 1956 (AMENDMENT)

Mr. Graham Bright, supported by Mr. Alex Carlile, Mr. Ken Weetch, Mr. Nicholas Lyell, Mr. Gareth Wardell and Mr. Jerry Hayes, presented a Bill to amend section 6 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 April and to be printed. [Bill 118.]

Orders of the Day

WAYS AND MEANS

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [18 March].

AMENDMENT OF THE LAW

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the national Debt and public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply;
(b) for refunding any amount of tax;
(c) for varying the rate of that tax otherwise than in relation to all supplies and importations; or
(d) for any relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

Budget Resolutions and Economic Situation

[Relevant documents: European Community Document No. 9792/85, Annual Economic Report 1985-86 and the unnumbered document, Annual Economic Report 1985-86 (final version as adopted by the Council).]

Mr. Speaker: No fewer than 27 right hon. and hon. Members have applied to speak and eight of them are Privy Councillors. In fairness to the House, I propose to interleave the calling of Privy Councillors with Back-Benchers and I propose to adopt a 10-minute limit on speeches between 7 pm and 8.50 pm. I hope that the Privy Councillors who are called before that time will bear that limit broadly in mind.

4.25 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Norman Tebbit): My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has presented to the House a Budget which carries forward the objectives of this Conservative Government.

No Budget can stand alone, and I am glad to see that many commentators have noted the manner in which, in many respects, this Budget has taken further the aims and reforms of earlier Budgets. It is a Budget that continues the drive towards the kind of economic way of life—a freer way of life—which has been endorsed twice by the electorate of this country, and will be endorsed again.

No one on this side of the House has ever deluded himself into a belief in instant prescriptions. When we set out in 1979, we said that we were setting out on a long and difficult task. The world recession made the task more difficult, as did that final futile spasm of the old guard anti-democratic union bosses, the coal strike. They have both been overcome.

We had a coherent view of how the reversal of our relative economic and industrial decline could be achieved. It is a view which experience has reinforced. The cornerstone of the work has been the reduction and control of inflation. Friday's figures for the retail price index and my right hon. Friend's forecast of 3½ per cent. inflation by the end of this year, when compared with an average level of inflation at 15½ per cent. during the previous Labour Government, underline this achievement.

[Mr. Norman Tebbit]

Of course, our success on that front has led some to forget the dangers of inflation. Indeed the question is sometimes put, should not we be prepared to accept a little more inflation to create more jobs? Memory should not be so short. It is not that long ago that, in that graphic phrase of the day, Britain was drinking in the last chance saloon, and yet even now there are those who would dash straight back in and call for another round—a round of spending and borrowing that would give us another inflationary hangover — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) may not be old enough to remember it, but it was fewer than 10 years ago.

Those were the days so rightly condemned by the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) who in 1976 said:

"Higher inflation, followed by higher unemployment. That is the history of the last twenty years".

He was speaking of the 20 years from 1956 to 1976.

The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) spoke for almost everyone when, according to *The Times* of 18 March 1976, he told the Labour party:

"There is a direct relationship between the level of pay received by those who have a job and the number of jobs the economy can support".

My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) put it in even harder and clearer terms when he said that

"inflation, if left unchecked, presents the biggest single threat to the standard of living of every person in the land".

In contrast to our Labour predecessors, we have not been limited to occasional pious thoughts on these matters. We have taken the necessary actions, consistently over a period. To defeat inflation requires a consistency of purpose, a consistency of action, and yields a consistency of effect. Too many Chancellors in the past have been forced into mismanagement by the call for instant solutions. They converted economic cycles into roller-coaster rides that left the stomach in the mouth.

As we know, for many years in each successive cycle the peak of inflation was higher than its predecessor. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, in his Chancellorship, broke that precedent. My right hon. Friend has built upon his success.

There is no safe level of inflation. It is the job of Government, through sound monetary and fiscal policies, to ensure——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Oh!

Mr. Tebbit: I shall read the figures to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) if he is not clear about it.

It is the job of Government to ensure that there is both consistent downward pressure on inflation and room for growth in the economy. Of course, success in overcoming inflation cannot guarantee a fall in unemployment, but a rise in inflation will certainly lead inexorably to an increase in unemployment. Cause and effect are not near simultaneous. Jobs are not lost as soon as prices go up, nor are they recreated quickly when prices are brought under control. None the less, the benefits of a steady and consistent approach can be seen. Since the sharp and deep recession, we have seen five years of economic growth alongside a sizeable reduction in inflation. As my right hon. Friend said, 1986 is set for output growth of 3 per cent. and inflation falling to 3·5 per cent. It is a record many ex-Chancellors would have dearly wished for during their term of office.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): It is an economy for the whizz kids.

Mr. Tebbit: In real terms, we now have an economy, and an industry, including manufacturing, which is growing, not declining. It suits the Opposition not to hear the facts. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) in particular finds difficulty in hearing while he is talking, and I suggest he stops talking.

Total fixed investment in the economy last year was at an all time record in real terms. The CBI's latest trends inquiry gives the best combined response on prospects for output and prices since the inquiries began in 1975. Manufacturing exports are at an all time high. Of course the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) will no doubt remind us that we have a deficit on our trade in manufactured goods. That is a tendency which has been growing — consistently exports were growing less quickly than imports—during the period of the last Labour Government as well as this Government. Manufacturing profitability is at its best since 1973 and productivity has increased by an average of 6 per cent. a year over the past five years.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way so early in his speech. In the interests of accuracy, will he point out that there was a substantial surplus on the balance of trade in manufactured goods when the Government took office? Now, for the first time in our history, there is a substantial deficit, and we are heading for a deficit of £4·5 billion. Can the right hon. Gentleman tell us how, under this wise Government, this has come about?

Mr. Tebbit: I said that there was a long established tendency in that direction because manufacturing exports were growing less quickly than manufacturing imports. That is not a new feature. It has continued and, not unnaturally, if such a tendency continues for long enough one moves from surplus into deficit.

In the meantime, in contrast to the Labour Government, we have maintained consistently a surplus on balance of payments.

Mr. Smith: What about oil?

Mr. Tebbit: Here we go again. I wonder whether the right hon. and learned Gentleman would say that in such a dismissive way if it was coal? What is wrong with exporting oil? It is not many weeks since the right hon. and learned Gentleman was saying that the whole of our strategy depended on revenue from oil. We have lost half of that in a matter of weeks. The economy still looks to be in very good shape.

It is only fair to recognise that some industrial capacity has been lost. It is only fair to agree that our competitors have not stood still waiting for us to catch up. We have begun to close the gap. Of course there are effects on unemployment. Our competitors have shed labour in manufacturing industry as they have raised productivity faster than demand has expanded and we have had to go faster still to close the gap in competitiveness.

A sign of the strength of the recovery is shown by recent figures for the mechanical engineering industry. This strength of recovery is most notable in the output of the

machine tool industry — a business in which the Opposition would have written us off years ago. Output rose by 20 per cent. last year, and that was the first rise for a long time.

Those in industry see good prospects and are encouraged by the Budget, despite the halving of oil revenues. It is fair to ask, in the light of what the right hon. and learned Gentleman and others have said on the matter, how the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) would have reacted to the dramatic change in oil prices had he been Chancellor. I imagine that, as usual, he would have over-reacted. People often do under stress, and he would have the stress of commitments to an extra £24 billion a year of public expenditure—alongside self denial of £4 billion to £5 billion of revenue from privatisation. He would have to wheel out the whole dreary paraphernalia of state intervention — the National Enterprise Board, the National Investment Bank, planning agreements and the like, with reactionary union bosses forced on to company boards while the right hon. Gentleman's penal tax policies would drive our most talented managers either to despair or to California. For luck he would direct pension funds money into a new generation of Meriden co-operatives, *Scottish Daily News's*, and the like. We know how he would react. We have seen him in office in the past when he was Secretary of State for Prices and Consumer Protection or, as his local newspaper the *Birmingham Post* referred to him, "Mr. Rising Price".

In an article in the *Birmingham Post* the right hon. Gentleman said:

> "We spent a lot of time in the last month looking at potato prices . . . once the drought has worked its way through and the pound has stabilised, we can expect a period when the inflation rate is going to move down again. We are on course, but we are travelling more slowly than we would have wished to".

Thus it would be back to the consideration of the price of potatoes by some wretched board and some other unfortunate Minister spending more time on that than ministerial duties warranted. *[Interruption.]* The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook says he would like to attack his record and is most willing to do so. We now have the prospect of stable prices and low taxes—the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook could not control the price of potatoes—with individuals and companies able to take their decisions in a free market, with fewer state monopolies, less state intervention, less fiscal bias and freedom to allow incentives to work and rewards to be available for hard work and success.

It is free enterprise and free consumers, not Governments, that will continue the process of creating jobs. The measures we have seen in this Budget and earlier Budgets show clearly how the prospect can be realised.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Why is my right hon. Friend being so selective in his attack on the Opposition Front Bench? Would he care to comment on the proposal of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) to double the expenditure of the Trade and Industry Department? Will he comment on the effect of that and its cost upon our national finances and economic situation?

Mr. John Smith: Watch out, it is a trap.

Mr. Tebbit: Perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman will be kind enough to allow me to answer the question. I am always extremely selective in what I say about the Opposition Front Bench. I select each of them in turn. I treat them with great courtesy and I tell the truth about them, which is a sad thing to have to do. My hon. Friend is right. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has proposed a massive increase in spending through the DTI.

Mr. Smith: Not doubling the expenditure.

Mr. Tebbit: I do not know whether it is double or merely 50 per cent. I do know that when the right hon. and learned Gentleman's Government left office there was massive spending in the DTI, not on new technologies or on bringing forward new industries, but on loss subsidies on the old fashioned state industries because they could not bear to deal with those industries' problems.

It is essential that tax reductions should be made where they do most good and that they should be matched by tax reform to ensure that tax does the least possible damage to incentives and enterprise and the maximum possible to promote a growing, flexible and responsive economy. One welcome consequence is the cut in tax on unincorporated businesses and the matching cut in corporation tax for small companies. This is only the latest in a series of reforms that have transformed the tax environment for business.

Perhaps most important, the business tax reform of 1984 is now coming fully into effect—a cut in special tax reliefs matched by a cut in corporation tax rates. The main rate in 1986-87 is down to 35 per cent., which is the lowest rate in any major industrial country, and the small companies rate is only 29 per cent., which is the marginal rate for about 90 per cent. of unincorporated businesses. The result is not a fall in revenue—far from it.

The aim of the reforms is to reduce distortion, to improve the quality of investment and to strengthen incentives to enterprise and growth. Of key importance is the aim to see the basic rate of taxation down to 25 per cent. I understand that that aim is shared by the Social Democratic and Liberal parties. I take it that that is why they will vote against the 1 per cent. cut in the basic rate tonight.

Many of our critics may say of our tax policy, "Jam tomorrow". We already have a lower basic rate than at any time since the second world war. It is four percentage points down so far and there is the prospect of more to come. It is jam tomorrow — just like yesterday and today. Under this Government, the incentives to enterprise will grow. Schemes to encourage employee shareholders will bring a greater identity of interests between workers and their firms. It is dividends in the pockets of workers that may do more to increase harmony in the factories than union bosses in board rooms. These Budget measures will help to create jobs in the economy. At the same time, more direct help will be given to help the long-term unemployed back into work by individual advice, training and allowances for those who take jobs on less than £80 a week.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) must be easily patronised — he said that he found these measures patronising — if he finds these measures patronising. They are a positive reponse to those who must feel left behind as others—some 400,000 in February alone — enter and leave the unemployment register. The increase of 55,000 in the community programme and of 35,000 in the number of enterprise allowance places offer renewed scope for those on the unemployment register to get back into work.

Mr. Foulkes: Rubbish.

Mr. Tebbit: There are limits, however, on how far it is possible to substitute Government schemes for jobs created in the market place without destroying more jobs. For many years, the United Kingdom suffered economic decline relative to our competitors. That has been halted or reversed.

Mr. Foulkes: Rubbish.

Mr. Tebbit: The hon. Gentleman says, "Rubbish". He should examine the facts. Since 1979, we have grown at the same rate as France and Germany.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): A real comedian.

Mr. Tebbit: In 1983 and 1985, the United Kingdom topped the European Community growth league. Productivity growth in the United Kingdom's economy as a whole since 1980 has been much higher than that in France or Germany. Those are the facts, although Opposition Members may not like them.

Our growth in manufacturing productivity since 1979 has been second only to Japan among the seven major industrial countries. Since 1981, United Kingdom manufacturing exports have grown at least as fast as world trade. The average of United Kingdom inflation, as compared to inflation in the OECD, has fallen from being 60 per cent. higher under the Labour Government to only some 10 per cent. higher between June 1983 and December 1985. In absolute terms, the average level of inflation in the United Kingdom under Labour stood more than six percentage points above that of our competitors, whereas in this Parliament it has been only one fifth of 1 per cent. higher.

Mr. Winnick: If there is such a success story, and if enterprise culture, as the Chancellor described it last week, works, why does mass unemployment continue and why are many of our fellow citizens denied the opportunity to work? Why is the number of people who have been jobless for one year or more increasing? Is the right hon. Gentleman saying that unemployment will be substantially lower by next year's Budget?

Mr. Tebbit: The hon. Gentleman knows better than to try to tempt an ex-Employment Minister of any party to forecast unemployment.

Mr. Winnick: Answer my question.

Mr. Tebbit: I have explained more than once that jobs can be lost very swiftly and that they take a long time to regain. *[Interruption.]* That certainly applies to Labour Governments. They never last long and take a long time to get back into office.

Perhaps I might explain to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) once again that, in 1979, our average productivity levels, especially in manufacturing industry, were way below those of our rivals. We would have had to shed many jobs just to reach the level that they were at in 1979. Since then, they have got further ahead. We are still pursuing them and having to shed jobs in many areas to reach the new levels. If the hon. Gentleman does not understand that, he has understood very little of his life so far. He has only to ask that great patron of the Labour party, Mr. Robert Maxwell, how many people he will have to dismiss from his newspaper to achieve productivity levels found in the rest of the world to get an answer to part of his question about unemployment.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): How does my right hon. Friend explain the fact that there are more long-term unemployed in the south of England than in the north, where I come from, when it is clear to everyone that the south is far more prosperous?

Mr. Tebbit: That is a matter which may be explained better as my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment's plan for counselling and advice for those who have been unemployed for more than a year works through the country.

Our record on inflation is far better than that of the Labour Government, when the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and Mrs. Shirley Williams tried to control prices. So, as the hon. Member for Walsall, North asked, are the jobs that we would expect to be generated by the growing and more productive economy appearing?

Mr. Foulkes: No.

Mr. Tebbit: On the contrary. To an extent they are —680,000 new jobs have been created since June 1983. That is better than the rest of the Community put together. [HON. MEMBERS: "They are the wrong jobs."] They are, none the less, jobs which people are very pleased to have. However, that is plainly not enough. The past five years of manufacturing output growth, now 13 per cent. above its lowest point in 1981, have been reflected not in gains in new jobs but in long overdue gains in productivity, without which there would have been even more closures and even more job losses, as I have just expained to the hon Member for Walsall, North, although I doubt whether he has yet caught on to the point.

The major obstacle to translating that productivity performance into new jobs is the tendency of unit labour costs, fuelled by high wage increases, to outstrip those of our competitors. The problem is not peculiar to the past few years. From 1974 to 1979 there was a relative decline of 25 per cent. in our international competitiveness. Our better performance recently is still not good enough. Industry must control its unit labour costs.

Faced with reality in 1976, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) called for a cut in living standards. He limited pay rises to 5 per cent. when inflation was running at more than 20 per cent. That would be the equivalent of a 10 per cent. pay cut with inflation at 5 per cent. as today. My right hon. Friend is certainly not asking for that, but we cannot exploit our improving productivity and output performance to create enough new jobs until earnings come back more closely into line with increases in productivity and our unit labour costs match those of our main competitor countries. That does not mean wage cuts. Those in work can enjoy an improving real level of earnings, as they have done under this Government — some 2·1 per cent. growth in real earnings per annum compared to less than half of 1 per cent. during the period of the Labour Government.

However, although those pay increases must be related to productivity and competition, as taxes are cut and inflation reduced, low pay rises can still mean a sharply improving standard of living. Moderation in pay helps, above all, the unemployed to be priced back into work. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock

and Doon Valley may sneer, but I shall return to this point later. This Budget, like its predecessors, improves the climate for job creation, but neither it nor any Budget can create——

Mr. Heffer: Rubbish.

Mr. Tebbit: The hon. Gentleman is going on a little. He may one day learn something, and, even if it takes us from the time that he is seven until he is 70, we shall keep trying.

This Budget improves the climate for job creation, but neither it nor any Budget can guarantee that jobs will be created. Foolish pay increases: strikes, poor management, bad product design or indifferent after-sales support, obsolete technology — any one of these can destroy existing jobs or abort new ones. Nor is the process immediate. A customer may be quickly lost and it may take years to regain his favour. The economic facts of life do not change with changes of Government, much as the Opposition Front Bench would like us to believe.

It is instructive to look back 10 years and to see how a Labour Government fared. From his sixth Budget in April 1976, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East careered on through that year along to his ninth Budget in December, swinging from wild and foolish boasting of success to come to dire threats of disaster just ahead. A Labour party press release captures the more windy and vainglorious mood. It says:

"The right hon. Denis Healey, Chancellor of the Exchequer, speaking at the Annual Dinner of Edinburgh East Labour Party . . . said:—'The new 4½ per cent. pay agreement between the Labour Government and the TUC can transform our prospects . . . It means we can be on top of inflation within eighteen months from now. It means more jobs and more in the shopping basket'"—

every prediction was wrong. He went on:

"Already the tributes to this achievement are pouring in from all over the world".

He might have added, "except from the TUC and the trades union members."

As we look back on the sad tale of broken pledges, we can see the huge borrowings and humiliation that came to the right hon. Gentleman at the hands of the International Monetary Fund. Hence the calls that he made for savage cuts in the standard of living for millions of ordinary workers. The deficit on our invisible trade grew, unemployment grew and the whole mess grew worse until it collapsed in the winter of discontent. Would it be any different next time?

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Yes.

Mr. Tebbit: It would be worse. In those days, the Leader of the Opposition was one of a small minority undermining the then Chancellor. Next time, he would be in No. 10 undermining his own Chancellor, if he had the chance.

On Tuesday last, the Leader of the Opposition was put up to say that this Government have borrowed more than any other Government in history. Of course, I am sure that his scriptwriters knew, even if they did not tell him, that in real terms they have done nothing of the sort. The PSBR has been brought down from 9·5 per cent. of GDP in 1975-76 to a Budget forecast of 2 per cent. in 1985-86. Inflation has fallen from 26·9 per cent. in August 1975 to about 5 per cent. for a comparable period 10 years on. The two sets of figures are not coincidental.

Mr. Bell: What would be the public sector borrowing requirement without asset sales?

Mr. Tebbit: Higher, but there is nothing wrong with asset sales.

In contrast to the strictures on borrowing, on Wednesday of last week, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook sought to remove what he termed our prejudice against borrowing. He and the Leader of the Opposition should get their act together. Are they for more borrowing or for less? Are they set once again to go down what the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth called the primrose path together, hand in hand?

They are for more borrowing—and not just a little more but a lot more. Last Wednesday my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) asked the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook by how much borrowing would go up. The right hon. Gentleman said he would give the figures, but failed to do so. As he has had some time to think since last Wednesday, I am prepared to give way to him so that he can let us have the figures now. By how much would borrowing go up under a Labour Government? If the right hon. Gentleman will not tell us the answer, we have to do the sums for him, and we shall keep doing the sums and adding them up.

During the debate over the past few days, Labour Members have criticised the Budget, but how proud the right hon. Member for Leeds, East would have been if he could have presented a Budget that was so popular and effective. Labour Members have said that the Budget does nothing for the poor, nothing for jobs, and is all for the rich. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Budget continues the attack on inflation, the cruellest tax which falls most heavily on the poor, not on the wealthy, who have assets to set against it. This tax is one of the worst agents of job destruction. Labour Members ignore the growing economy, which is the source of new jobs. They ignore the further direct employment measures that add to those announced in the autumn statement.

From time to time the Opposition have given us some glimpses, obscure and contradictory, of their economic policies. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook does not want to tell us about the key to it—how much they would borrow. He refuses every invitation to give us those figures. We have seen it all before. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East said:

"we are obliged to spell out precisely where the jobs will come from and the consequential effects on inflation, on the balance of payments and on borrowing."—[*Official Report*, 20 March 1986; Vol 94, c. 438.]

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East will not thank the hon. Gentleman for that, and nor will the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East said that it is important to cost everything in detail—he would say that, would he not?

Nor will we allow the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook to present only those aspects of his policies which he believes would appeal most—that is his call to the many to confiscate from the few. It would not be a joke if the right hon. Gentleman's borrowings and taxings ever came to pass, any more than it was when the right hon. Member for Leeds, East was calling for savage cuts in the standard of living. We shall make sure that all the measures proposed by the Labour party will be considered together. We shall see to what levels of taxes or borrowing they would bring us.

[Mr. Tebbit]

I notice that the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) has not managed to attend the debate today. He has a plan for sneaking through the middle unnoticed. He expects to give a stimulus to the economy, modest in size but far-reaching in its effects. He just cannot let go of that old demand lever. He and his colleagues would take back the 1p reduction in the basic rate of tax, and they would be back into the game of demand management.

The alliance foresees a 50 per cent. increase in the size of the PSBR. Since the Budget there has been a fall of 1 per cent. in interest rates. How adverse a reaction—by contrast with that vote of confidence, and that of the stock market—would there be on interest rates and inflation if we were to follow the course advocated by the right hon. Member for Hillhead? He would not carry the confidence of industry or the markets. Nor would industry welcome his incomes policy proposals. The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) says that we must not have a low-paid, low-skill economy. I agree. But by putting Government controls in place of a free market for jobs and skills, that is what he would bring about.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The hon. Member for Stockton and Barclays.

Mr. Tebbit: I do not think that I need any interventions from the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). I am looking forward to the uncouth sneer being swiped off his face when his attack on the Prime Minister is put in its place very firmly indeed. He will regret having made a fool of himself, just as the right hon. Member for Hillhead will do.

We can see plainly the alternatives to the skilful Budget of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. The Labour party's approach would be to go straight back to 1976 as fast as it could and straight back to a siege economy. The Liberals and the SDP would get there by a more devious and slower route — what those with long political memories would call the Bassetlaw by-election approach.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Those with not so very long political memories recall that when my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) was Chancellor of the Exchequer there were 600,000 unemployed and we had a negative PSBR.

Mr. Tebbit: Those with long political memories will also remember the conduct of the right hon. Member for Hillhead. We recollect the Bassetlaw affair, which was typical of the style of that Government and of the right hon. Gentleman. Two days before the Bassetlaw by-election Mrs. Castle swore that there was no economic freeze on the way. But, just a matter of weeks later, the right hon. Member for Hillhead, as the Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced £250 million of additional taxation, new action to tighten the credit squeeze and all the normal paraphernalia of a Labour Budget. That is the Bassetlaw factor, and it is typical of SDP policies.

We have no urge to go back to the policies from which our ills have sprung. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is familiar with this story as he was a supporter of that Labour Government and of the right hon. Member for Hillhead. By contrast, our policies will bring us to where we can see not only an improvement in this country's relative economic position but steady growth in the economy. That is the only way—although nobody would deny that it is a slow and difficult road—to generate enough new jobs to overcome rising unemployment.

Our objectives, to which the Budget is addressed, are to further the development in this country of a new economic liberalism, or people's capitalism — call it what one will. It means people setting up in their own businesses — and 750,000 have done so under this Government. It means people owning the homes in which they live — and more than 800,000 former council tenants now do so in the teeth of opposition from Labour Members. It means people owning shares, joining in the task of providing the capital to build our industry, and determining its future and theirs. Under this Government the number of those owning shares has more than doubled, and this Budget will mean that more can do so.

It means more people owning a stake in the firm in which they work, sharing in its risks and its rewards. More than 1 million employees now take part in share schemes — *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may sneer and laugh. They do not like people owning shares in businesses. Above all, they do not like trade unionists doing so. But we want many more to own shares.

The Budget means people keeping more of their income to determine for themselves how it should be saved or spent. It means more individuals and more companies contributing their own money to charities, and helping one another directly. It means more people owning their own pensions. It means more people running their own trade unions. That is something that the Labour Front Bench refuses to accept. It means people knowing that they can seek work without closed shop restrictions, or finding that employers are forced to pay too much, and cannot afford to take them on. It means people being free to choose where and how to invest, without restrictions and distortions, so as to create the wealth that is needed and to create the jobs that are needed.

Those are the Government's and the Budget's objectives. They are the right ones for the country. The Budget takes us in the right direction, towards those objectives, and I commend it to the House.

5.4 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I shall try hard to avoid being drawn into all the irrelevancies of the peroration of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, but I am sure that he will forgive me if I touch lightly on one point. He commended a change in trade union attitudes, for which he accepted responsibility. On behalf of the whole Labour and trade union movement, may I say a very genuine and warm "thank you" to him for instituting the political fund ballot? I think that all the ballots have now been held, and every single one of them has confirmed by a large majority the decision of British trade unions to have political funds. Indeed, some trade unions, which had failed to get political funds before, were able, in the wave of opinion generated by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Tebbit: I am most grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for seeing the good sense of my plans, which he and his colleagues opposed. However, if the facts had been set out fairly in any of those ballots, the

result might have gone the other way. But that is the rub of the green. I accept the democratic process, and I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will also accept it when it goes against him.

Mr. Smith: If the right hon. Gentleman has any complaint about the conduct of those elections, and if that is his excuse, he should take up the matter with the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies. I am sure that he will listen to any complaints. But instead of congratulating the trade unions, the right hon. Gentleman has to concoct another smear. That is typical of him.

There is a rumour among trade unions that there is a trophy called the Margaret Thatcher challenge trophy, which was to be given to the union with the highest yes vote in the ballot. The union is now wondering what to do with it. I suggest that it should present it to the right hon. Gentleman, with the grateful thanks of all concerned.

Mr. Winnick: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is widely believed that companies should do precisely the same as trade unions, and should have a ballot before donating to political causes? Is it not remarkable that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster should lecture everyone about democracy when he has not been elected to his position as chairman of the Tory party? Why is there no elementary democracy in the Tory party?

Mr. Smith: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me about that. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is always saying that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, so now that he is chairman of the Tory party perhaps he will tell us—[HON. MEMBERS: "Talk about the Budget."] The right hon. Gentleman distracted me and I am sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you will bear witness to that. I do want to deal with the Budget. But the right hon. Gentleman has an opportunity now, as chairman of the Conservative party, to acquire a reputation for consistency and fairness and to propose, in the next legislative Session, similar treatment for companies in their donations to his party.

In recent years it has been customary for the final day of debate on the Budget to cover matters relating to trade and industry. It is usual for the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to open the debate. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster criticised the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) for not being here, and would no doubt be ready to criticise any other hon. Member for not being here. But he should perhaps note that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is not here, and that as far as I can see not a single member of that Department has seen fit to come to the Chamber for the debate.

It was appropriate for the Chancellor of the Duchy to speak in the debate last year, because he was then the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. This year, however, he appears in a different guise. I wonder why he decided to speak in this debate. Is he worried that he might somehow be forgotten if he does not manage to speak in debates in the Chamber? Why did he elbow aside either the Paymaster General or the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in order to speak in this debate? Once again the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was unfortunate. Where is he? Is he or his Ministers away negotiating some other deal to sell off another part of British industry?

There is one happy feature about the right hon. Gentleman being here and it is that he is closely involved in the affairs that may be keeping the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry away from the Chamber. When he was Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, did not the right hon. Gentleman invite General Motors to make an application to take over Leyland Vehicles and Land Rover? Was he not the Minister responsible for starting the secret talks that went on for 18 months until they were flushed out by the Opposition when we found out the information and challenged Ministers?

The right hon. Gentleman appears to have been involved in bringing the talks to an end. Has he reflected since what they were all about? Last Sunday *The Observer* told us about the right hon. Gentleman's activities. We were given a blow-by-blow account of these frenetic negotiations. *The Observer* said:

> "All week they had been in discussions with Mr. Channon and his officials—with Mr. Norman Tebbit coming in and out. The effort was to find a compromise formula that would be palatable to the backbenchers.
>
> On Wednesday they thought they had agreement on the 49-51 principle with GM eventually taking the majority after it had proved its 'good citizenship'.
>
> Then Mr. Channon came back, saying this would not work, and suggested . . . an overseeing board".

In view of his close involvement in these matters the right hon. Gentleman might have told us something about that. After all, we are discussing trade and industry and the motor vehicle industry is an important matter for us in the Budget. The right hon. Gentleman has a direct and personal responsibility for the fiasco that the whole British Leyland affair has become. If a charge of anti-Americanism is to be flung at anyone, what about a company like General Motors that spent £1 million on a wild goose chase? Will that company not feel that there is a tinge of anti-Americanism in this Conservative Government—and a rather expensive one at that?

Mr. Tebbit: I hope that the press release of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's speech is now over. He has been on his feet for nearly 10 minutes. Perhaps now we could get on with the debate on the Budget—not least as the whole Treasury team is here eager to discuss the Budget and to hear what level of PSBR the right hon. and learned Gentleman thinks there ought to be in a Socialist Budget. The team is also eager, as am I, to take him to one side later on and show him several different versions in several different newspapers of the recent talks.

Mr. Smith: The easiest way of solving that problem is for the Government to tell us what is going on. They have had many opportunities to do that and if there is a problem of misrepresentation it can be cleared up.

Mr. Hickmet *rose*——

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman is stopping me from getting on with the Budget, but I shall give way.

Mr. Hickmet: The right hon. and learned Gentleman's party made its position clear on the link between General Motors and British Leyland. It does not want that link at any price. How will he react if, for example, the operations of General Motors in Britain are wound down as a result of the policy that his party has adopted?

Mr. Smith: I hope the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will forgive me if I answer that intervention, even though it means I shall have to talk a little bit longer. It is an odd conclusion to draw, is it not, that when the

[Mr. Smith]

Government initiate a project that invites General Motors to acquire parts of British Leyland and that project does not come off, if General Motors then decides to do something with its plant, that is the responsibility of the Opposition. That is a new one on me.

Whether in his role as chairman of the Conservative party or as an ex-Secretary of State, the right hon. Gentleman had a shot at defending the Budget. However, he made very little attempt to deal with trade and industry. He said little about manufacturing industry and gave us a rather lame and tendentious explanation about the debilitating balance of trade deficit on manufactured goods. There was a substantial surplus when the Government took office and now we are heading for a £4 million deficit. No explanation has been offered about why that has happened under this wise and beneficent Government, and the right hon. Gentleman did not even give us a clue about an explanation.

We know that for a long time there has been what one might call massive scepticism by the Government about manufacturing industry. I know they are trying hard to change their tune, but in 1981 the Chancellor of the Exchequer said in a memorable phrase:

"I do not understand the importance which the Opposition and some Tories give to manufacturing industry."

That is on the record. It is as notable as his other famous prediction that young people in Britain would get not so much low-tech as no-tech jobs. The Chancellor can deny it if he likes but he made both of those statements.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): That sort of dishonest quotation does not serve any purpose. The right hon. and learned Gentleman did not give the full text. What I said was that, although high technology had an important part to play in future, many future jobs would not be so much low-tech as no-tech. I did not say all jobs: I said many of them. That is a fact in the United States and here.

Mr. Smith: The right hon. Gentleman appears to concede that I quoted him correctly. I am not being accused, nor could I reasonably be so accused, of misquoting him. I said, "not so much low-tech as no-tech" and in his intervention the right hon. Gentleman quoted the very words I used. His excuse is that he did not say all the jobs would be low-tech, just many of them. *[Interruption.]* If we go on the way we are going, that will be the result of the Government's policies. The right hon. Gentleman might learn something by listening, so let me repeat what I said. If the Government continue with their present policies, that will be the result.

What an ambition for our young people! Let us give them high-tech jobs. Would not that be a better ambition for the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Government? As many as possible of our young people should be obtaining high-tech jobs, and we would be going in that direction if the Government were not turning them away from technical colleges and polytechnics and universities and were encouraging them to stay on at school. *[Interruption.]* When someone talks about opportunity, all the Government can think about is money. They can never draw the balance between the enjoyment of human opportunity and the reasonable investment required to achieve it.

The Chancellor is trying to change his stance. We saw a rather pathetic attempt at that in his intervention. That is because he is beginning to realise that the plan that was there before will not work. That plan was that Britain could live off service industries and oil revenues and the remittances from foreign investments. It was felt that we could get by quite nicely on that and the Government did not need to worry too much about manufacturing industry. We heard all the speeches at that time about the undue importance attached to manufacturing industry, but even the Chancellor now realises that a number of things are changing. The nation is becoming more and more convinced that the catastrophic consequences of a decline in our manufacturing industry are quite unbearable.

The Aldington report was published last year. All that gets from the Chancellor of the Exchequer is a snigger. The distinguished authors of that report were rubbished before the ink was dry on the document. Not only was it turned down without being read, but attacks were made on its individual authors. That report makes good reading for anyone who wants to understand Britain's industrial predicament. It said what would happen when the volume of North sea oil declined. The report was not able to predict any more than the Government were able to predict that the value of North sea oil would decline in an even shorter period. That has accentuated the problem and the Chancellor knows that more than anyone else in the House, or at least he ought to.

We have now been brought close to the reality of our economic position. North sea oil is not so obviously helping us. Of course it is still of enormous benefit to the Government, although not as much benefit as it was, but still useful in terms of balance of payments and our overall balance of trade and Government revenue. To this Government it has meant tens of billions of pounds and yet they have wasted most of that money. They have had those funds in a way that no other Government have ever had them. They have had that money without having to go through the complicated business of raising it by taxation or by cutting expenditure. *[Interruption.]* It was taxation which the Government inherited. North sea oil was on stream in 1980 and the Government inherited the revenues. What point are the Government seeking to make? If they are saying that they did not have a marvellous windfall of North sea oil revenues, no one will believe them. *[Interruption.]* I should like to say what the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster kept saying to my colleagues—if the right hon. Gentleman would listen occasionally, he might learn something to his benefit.

That is why there is apprehension about the crumbling technological base of our manufacturing industry. The failure to invest in British manufacturing industry, to develop our research and development and to provide proper training within industry are at the root of our economic problems.

I should like to consider quickly some of the facts. Manufacturing output stagnated in 1985 and is still 6 per cent. below the 1979 level. Manufacturing investment is still more than 10 per cent. less than the 1979 level. The United Kingdom's manufacturing trade deficit is forecast to increase to £4·5 billion in 1986, although we had a substantial surplus in 1980. One would not guess that that was the position from the Chancellor's complacent survey in his Budget speech. There was one glimmer of light in

his speech — one faint dawning of comprehension. Referring to the effect on the economy of the fall in the oil price, the Chancellor stated:

"This provides British industry with an outstanding opportunity both to increase its exports and to reduce import penetration in the home market, but it will only be able to seize that opportunity if it meets two conditions. First, it must keep firmer control of its labour costs. Secondly, it must spend more of its much healthier level of profits on investing for the future in research and development and in training. Both the opportunity, and the responsibility to see that it is not thrown away, rest fairly and squarely on the shoulders of British management."—[*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 169.]

First, there was an admonition to industry to keep control of its labour costs. But there was no admonition to the City. There was no feeling that perhaps labour costs in the City were rather high because of the huge salaries that are paid. The "golden helloes" managed to avoid any action by the Government in the Budget. I wonder whether the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster ever says to the stockbrokers, "If you would cut your wages a bit you would create more jobs." On the basis of some of the very large salaries of stockbrokers there must be enormous scope for job creation in the stock exchange.

If the proposition of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is fundamentally true and if one divides a stockbroker's salary by five, there would be five more stockbrokers — or at least that is what the right hon. Gentleman says to the workers.

Mr. Tebbit *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I am to be given an explanation?

Mr. Tebbit: I say the same to people in the City as I say anywhere else — that if they allow their costs to become higher than those of their competitors they will lose their market share and jobs, their salaries will fall and the "golden helloes" will turn into brass goodbyes. They understand that lesson more clearly than those in other industries.

Mr. Smith: If that is the lesson which they understand, it is amazing that salaries keep going up instead of coming down. If the right hon. Gentleman has been having chats with them, he has been singularly unconvincing and unpersuasive. Everyone knows that salaries in the City and in the stock exchange are hopelessly out of control. It does not help if the Government say to people who are struggling to make ends meet, "You should be careful about asking for wage increases or for improvements in conditions", because they can see the conditions and wages offered to people on high salaries.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that there is no need to test the theory of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster about low wages equalling more jobs, because long ago the Low Pay Unit worked out that the areas where wages are lowest are exactly the areas where unemployment is highest?

Mr. Smith: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. He is well aware, as are many other hon. Members, of the fundamental principle which seems to motivate the Government — that we need high wages to give incentives to people at the top end of the wage bracket and low wages to give incentives to people at the bottom end of the wage bracket. We have noticed throughout the Budget the attempt to drive more people into low-paid temporary occupations. The drive is not so much to find jobs as to accentuate the prevalence of low pay in the economy. I am sorry to say that a number of the Budget measures are leading in that direction.

The Chancellor has recognised that there should be more investment in research and development and in training, but the trouble is that he thinks it is simply a matter for industrial management. He thinks that the investment rests on their shoulders and implies that it does not rest on anyone else's shoulders. I believe that it is a matter for the whole community because the whole community will be affected by a failure to invest in industry and in research and development and a failure to develop adequate training. If we had employers like those in West Germany, we could perhaps hand over training to them. The West German employers take their responsibilities serously. No one can say that British employers, left to their own devices, have a good record on training. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has an inglorious record, having dismantled 16 of the 23 industrial training boards.

On 12 March 1986, the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science

"how many of the leading industrial states have progressively increased expenditure on civil research over the past five years; and what is the comparative position of the United Kingdom expressed in real terms."—[*Official Report*, 12 March 1986; Vol. 93, c. 474.]

In an informative answer, the Minister for Information Technology gave some alarming statistics. The increase in gross research and development expenditure from 1979 to 1983—the latest date for which figures were available—was 3 per cent. in the United Kingdom. The increase in the United States was 18 per cent., in Japan 44 per cent., in Germany 10 per cent., in France 10 per cent., in Italy 45 per cent. and in Canada 32 per cent. The United Kingdom is not just bottom of the league but is lamentably bottom of the league, with only a 3 per cent. increase in civil research and development in the past four years from a total budget of $12·6 billion. That is appalling. If Britain continues to invest such a minuscule part of its assets in research and development, it will lose the technological base of its industry and will not be able to develop the new products and processes for tomorrow.

The Government's contribution, through their direct funding of research and development, is pitiful. There is not a research institution or university that is not pleading for more resources for primary research and development. The Government's niggardly attitude is disgraceful. If the Government gave research institutions and universities what they gave in a handout to abolish inter vivos gifts and capital transfer tax, that would be a useful start. Why not give that £55 million to research and development instead of to the rich?

Sir Julian Ridsdale (Harwich): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the increase in profitability to 8 per cent., compared with 0·3 per cent. in 1979, is a means of getting increased research and development in companies?

Mr. Smith: That would be understandable if companies were doing that now. It was only a matter of days ago that Sir Brian Nicholson, the Government Chief Scientist, in evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology——

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Peter Brooke): Sir Brian?

Mr. Smith: Yes, as I understand it — the Government's Chief Scientist. He said that the Government were deeply upset at the failure to invest, given the substantial increase in the profits of British companies. I do not think that the Government's excuse will wash. I am given to understand that the Department of Trade and Industry, which is not represented here today, is pressing hard for companies to do that, and so they should.

Why do the Government turn their back on supporting schemes for research and development? Why is there no reference in the Budget to training in industry? Why are there no fiscal incentives, schemes or plans? Why are no ambitions revealed in the Budget? The Government simply have no industrial strategy. They are just moving about the market place, hoping that it will come right. They are not taking any steps, such as those taken by most of our major competitors, to ensure that fundamental aspects such as research and development, training and investment are securely put into place. There is a failure to comprehend that there is more to industry than just giving freedom to the entrepreneur and his wealth. One cannot leave it at that. If the entrepreneur does not invest his wealth wisely, the consequences for the whole of the community are devastating. There may be increased unemployment. There may be diminished opportunity for our young people. There may be a failure to conquer the markets on which the standard of living of us all—not just of the entrepreneur—depends. That is why this is a legitimate matter for community concern.

Today, investment is not being made in new products because we are in the grip of merger mania. When a company that has extra money decides what to do with it, it is far too easy for it to gobble up another company rather than to improve its products and its market share. It may improve its market share but it will do so by eliminating its competitor, because the natural tendency of unregulated markets is towards monopoly. One would have expected even a Conservative Government, recognising that, to adopt a tougher policy on mergers and monopoly, but we do not find that.

Even more lamentably, the present situation in which the creditor can too easily acquire his competition forces industrial managements continually into short-term profits. They must have short-term profits and those profits must be reported to the stock exchange to keep the predator away. When there is a choice between short-term projects—which represent essential defensive security—and long-term investment, long-term investment goes by the board, and the Government look on complacently. The Government have been reviewing competition policy endlessly and continuously for a number of years without doing anything about it. Even the Governor of the Bank of England said the other day that the matter had got out of hand. It is a pity that we do not have a Chancellor of the Exchequer who would say a sensible thing like that.

We need a better investment plan. That is why the Labour party proposes that we should have a national investment bank, which would make sure that long-term investment was secured for British industry. However, when sensible and practical suggestions are put forward, all we hear from right hon. and hon. Gentlemen on the Government Benches are silly party political sniggers. The national investment bank would make sure that there was long-term investment at suitable rates of interest. In West Germany, a billion pounds was invested in small and medium-sized businesses by KFB, an admirable bank to which the House of Lords report paid particular attention. Why should not this country have mechanisms to ensure that there is investment in the wealth-creating sectors of the economy? Why cannot the Conservative party have the intelligence to appreciate a good idea when it is presented with one? *[Interruption.]* One of my hon. Friends suggests that there is not enough of that commodity to go around. There is distressing evidence that that may be so.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): The right hon. and learned Gentleman rightly refers to the manufacturing sector of the economy as the wealth-producing sector. No doubt, like many of us, he reads *The Economist*. He will have seen there that the wealth-producing sector also embraces the City, about which he has been so disparaging. No doubt he has noticed that the invisible earnings not only contribute to the wealth of this country but contribute a very large number of jobs. In the unlikely event of the right hon. and learned Gentleman returning to power, would he kill the City's earning capacity in his quest for manufacturing industry?

Mr. Smith: I thought that the hon. Gentleman had followed my argument that to depend on the City was not enough. We need to manufacture. The City is rather better at creating jobs in other countries than in our own. The Chancellor boasted about the amount of money that we have invested abroad. He said that we could live like remittance men. He said that there would be a flow of remittances returning from the investments.

The hon. Member for Dorset, South (Viscount Cranborne) is slightly behind the times. He is playing the tune to which I referred earlier—that we can take some chances with manufacturing industry. However, the Government have become a little worried and have changed their stance. It is a pity that the hon. Gentleman has not noticed that. We need to set three engines of recovery in motion. We need a proper investment policy in manufacturing industry, a proper research and development policy and a proper training policy. We are slipping in all three areas.

I must mention one other factor — the near disappearance of regional industrial assistance. I calculate that the Government have more than halved the amount of support for industry that they provide. Hon. Members may recently have seen a very revealing "World in Action" programme on television about some young people from Middlesbrough who went down to High Wycombe to seek work. Although they went by bus, they were following the advice of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to get on their bikes. They went to High Wycombe because they could find no jobs in Middlesbrough. One of them found a reasonably well-paid job fairly quickly, because he had a skill — a skill for which there was no use in Middlesbrough. He was clearly a man who wanted to find work. He was prepared to separate himself from his family to find it. I think that he was paid £120 net in the factory. It cost him £57 to pay for his digs during the week and a visit home every week or fortnight—I forget which—to see his wife and children. He explained that he could not go on like that, with so little left after the £57 had been subtracted, and that he was contemplating returning to Middlesbrough.

Mr. John Townend *rose*——

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman should listen with a little sympathy and understanding——

Mr. Townend *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman. He does not deserve to be given way to. If the public could have seen the look on the hon. Gentleman's face as I was describing the predicament of those people, it would have been a telling political indictment.

Another person from Middlesbrough was told that he could go to High Wycombe too. He came down with his girlfriend; they were contemplating getting married. He too found a job—not so well paid—and his girlfriend found a job in a cafe. They put their wages together and decided to try to set up home in High Wycombe. They went to the estate agents to see whether they could buy a house. They tried every estate agent in High Wycombe, but even the cheapest house cost £10,000 or £15,000 more than they could afford. At the end of the programme, the question was asked: what should they do next? The man who had left his family in Middlesbrough could not take them to High Wycombe because he could not afford to buy a house and there were no council houses available. Should he remain separated from his family and continue to pay so much for lodgings and travel?

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: Should the other couple live perpetually in digs or furnished lettings in High Wycombe because they could not buy a house? Those people followed the right hon. Gentleman's advice, and that is what happened. Any sensible Government would say, "Why not get the jobs in Middlesbrough, and get to the heart of the problem? Why not spend some of our communal resources helping to create jobs in Middlesbrough?" That is what regional industrial assistance is all about.

That story is revealing about life in modern Britain. There are opportunities, wages and jobs in the south, but very little is available in the north, and the term "north" covers an increasingly wide area of the country. There is a deep divide, which is worrying people in the south as well as the north. Our citizens do not wish to live in a country in which the divisions are becoming so sharp and ugly. A sharp and ugly division is growing between the very well-heeled and the growing under-class, and it is an affront to our conscience.

The Conservatives could give long-term supplementary benefit to the long-term unemployed. They could give about £10 a week to poor unemployed families if they did one simple thing — restored the investment income surcharge which was removed a few Budgets ago. The amount thus saved would more or less meet the cost of long-term supplementary benefit. The investment income surcharge was imposed on investment incomes of over £7,000 a year. People had, by definition, to have £70,000 capital before they benefited from the change. What proper society would give the money available to such people and deny it to the suffering long-term unemployed, the poor families and the needy? In my book, that is not a political choice but a moral one. It is one which the people of this country, when these matters have been made even more clear to them than they have been already, will have no hesitation in answering.

The Budget is both unfair and irrelevant. It is unfair to the divisions between north and south and it is unfair to the divisions between rich and poor. It is supremely irrelevant to putting our manufacturing industry and our economy back on their feet. It is a matter of regret for the whole country that this is happening. It is a matter of shame for this Government.

5.40 pm

Mr. Leon Brittan (Richmond, Yorks): In his speech the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) dealt with a number of wide and important issues which have been with us for a considerable period. I do not agree with his conclusions. However, he has been wise, from his own narrow point of view, not to focus very much upon what the Budget actually says. On the other hand, I welcome the opportunity to join those who have congratulated my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on combining in his Budget a continuing policy of sound finance with the imagination and ingenuity of his proposals.

When I was Home Secretary, naturally I was particularly anxious, as the Minister with responsibility for policy towards the voluntary sector, that the Government should give what help they could to charities. I am delighted that the Chancellor has now been able to give fiscal reality to what were then just a number of embryonic ideas. Equally, I welcome the measures to encourage investment in equities and the proposals to stimulate profit sharing. However, all those measures must be seen in the context of the central Budget decisions on the Government's fiscal and monetary stance.

It is no accident that from the moment when the Government took firm and unpopular action in 1981 to bring the public sector borrowing requirement under control we have seen steady and continuous growth. Therefore, I applaud the Chancellor's decision to continue the downward path of public borrowing as a percentage of gross domestic product and, indeed, to set the public sector borrowing requirement at £7 billion, which is slightly below the level indicated in last year's medium term financial strategy. That is, of course, the key decision in the whole Budget. It is of profound significance that it was that decision, and the Budget constructed around it, that immediately led to a fall in interest rates and the mortgage rate. If one were to ask anyone in industry or business today what single step could be taken which would assist them most in expanding and protecting the jobs of today and providing the jobs of tomorrow, I have no doubt at all that it would be one which would result in a fall in interest rates.

Having taken the central fiscal decisions, the Chancellor had to decide how to distribute the limited amount of largesse that was left to him of about £1 billion. In any Budget there is a certain amount of giving with one hand and taking away with the other—perhaps rather more of that in this Budget than in most—but at the end of the day, on that analysis, there was still only about £1 billion left to play with. That money could, of course, be used to increase spending or to reduce taxes. There are several ways of doing both. All of them are likely to stimulate employment in the short run.

The difference in the extent to which the different measures—increasing expenditure or reducing taxes—would do so is, frankly, not very great. Within the total of only £1 billion, the differences between the impact on

[Mr. Leon Brittan]

jobs of the various possiblities are very small indeed. So there is simply no question of one route being remotely open to the Chancellor as the right one for jobs, while the others are not.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General pointed out, public works programmes today are far from being the best way of getting the most jobs for any given expenditure. The question of the level of public works or capital expenditure more generally in the public sector should be decided on merit, not as a means of short term job creation. In crude terms, if one were thinking that way—and it would be the wrong way to think—the way to create most jobs in the short term is to employ people directly in the public sector or indirectly through the use of public money by such means as special employment measures.

If expenditure of that kind could make a huge difference to the level of employment, it might be tempting to decide to spend the limited sum of £1 billion on that basis. But with that sort of money, it cannot possibly make any substantial difference. Therefore, it would be wrong to decide what to do on such a short term basis. The decision should be made on longer term structural grounds—on the basis of not of what would give the the most immediate boost, which would be dissipated after a short while, but of what would most help to change the structure of the economy in a way that would make it more productive, more innovative, and more likely to grow in a sustained and sustainable way.

It is because reductions in the burden of taxation are likely to have that longer term structural effect that I think the Chancellor was right to spend about £100 million on specific employment measures and the rest on reductions in taxation. The case for tax cuts on those grounds was immensely persuasively made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) earlier in this debate.

The question then arises: what sort of tax cuts should they be? Should they be personal or corporate, direct or indirect? For some time I have believed that the first priority should be to cut personal taxation but to increase allowances over and above indexation to the greatest possible extent That gives most help to those who need it most and takes many of them out of tax altogether. It helps most in the poverty and unemployment traps. But in my view the argument in favour of proceeding in that direction became substantially less strong in the face of the reforms of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. They make a significant difference to the choice between increasing allowances and reducing the basic rate of income tax. Therefore, I became less resolute in my preference for increasing allowances.

That preference was further diminished when I heard the Chancellor announce that at the higher rate he was not indexing thresholds in line with inflation. Indeed, the top rate threshold has been increased by less than half the amount that full indexation would prescribe. In the past, all the thresholds have normally gone up proportionately. The failure to follow that principle this year has not been sufficiently noted. It makes an important difference to the argument and to the impact of the cut in the basic rate of income tax.

I must confess that I was only finally converted to full acceptance that it was right to reduce the rate rather than to increase allowances further when I heard my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury explain last Wednesday that it was the turn this year—I stress "this year"—of those within the income ranges of £5,000 to £20,000 to benefit and, above all, when I heard him say that in choosing to make a reduction in the basic rate this year the Government are not saying that basic reductions are in some sense better than threshold increases. The proper choice between the two will, I assume, have to be reconsidered afresh next year.

However, I am afraid that if the Government's task of persuasion has been effective as far as I am concerned on this point, I have more difficulty with what has been said in the Budget and with what appears in the Red Book about monetary policy. In the very short term, any weakness in monetary policy may be masked by the overall support that is currently rightly being given to the Government's general economic stance, but that should not be a pretext for ignoring what seems to me to be a real problem that is potentially storing up trouble for the future.

The Red Book says that there is some scope for varying the balance between fiscal and monetary policy. I cannot help feeling that fiscal policy is having to do most of the work this year. I find what is said about monetary policy lapidary, tentative and not wholly convincing. That is not entirely the Chancellor's fault. We have simply not found a monetary aggregate that is credible as a target to seek to follow.

To select instead a couple of aggregates and then to say that the exchange rate will also be taken into account, without saying how in any very cogent way, is hardly likely to produce a convincing monetary policy, especially if one of the targets has proved as broken a reed as sterling M3. As recently as in last year's medium-term financial strategy the target range for sterling M3 was set at 4 to 8 per cent., but it has been rightly felt that the failure to meet that target did not mean that monetary policy has been too lax. Other indications show that it was not.

What does one do about sterling M3? The answer given is that sterling M3 does not behave as it used to behave because of the rapid fall in velocity in recent years. Because of that, a new target for 1986-87 has been set at 11 to 15 per cent.—a near trebling of the lower end of the range and a near doubling of the upper end of the range —compared with what was set for this year only 12 months ago.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman seriously maintaining that monetary policy is lax when we have the highest real interest rates in the world by 6 per cent.?

Mr. Brittan: No, I am not. That is exactly what I have said. I am dealing with a problem, which still exists, of how one handles, sets and determines what monetary policy should be. I was going on to say that if one looks at chart 2.3 in the Red Book, which shows the velocity of the monetary aggregates, it is clear that the velocity has been falling fairly steadily since 1980, and there has certainly not been an acceleration of that fall in the last year to justify so huge an increase in the target range. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the target range has been chosen on the basis of what is attainable rather than what has any real significance in terms of the assessment of the appropriate degree of tightness of the monetary policy. That is the answer to the hon. Gentleman.

The lack of real belief in sterling M3 is borne out by two further points. First, the Red Book rather plaintively tells us that

"the high proportion of interest bearing deposits within broad money has meant that the immediate response of broad liquidity aggregates to changes in short term interest rates is highly uncertain."

In ordinary language, if sterling M3 looks as if it is going wrong, we have no idea whether our only known instrument of affecting it, now that we have given up overfunding, will put it right.

Secondly, it is significant that no target or illustrative range for sterling M3 is given beyond 1986-87, although figures for GDP and M0 are given for a further three years up to and including 1989-90. The reality is that, with monetary aggregates in disrepute, monetary policy has increasingly been dependent on exchange rates, but the policy has not been clearly spelt out. The difficulty—and I hope to show why it has practical importance—is that, if monetary policy cannot be spelt out convincingly, the markets are uncertain, the authorities may have to react, and the effect is that interest rates are likely to be higher than they would otherwise be and probably change more often.

Excessive interest rates and frequent changes in them are damaging to industry. Therefore, this is not some theoretical or esoteric argument. If credible and comprehensive monetary policy is likely to lead to lower interest rates, that is a valuable prize for which we ought to strive.

I do not believe that there is any monetary target currently in sight that will provide a more worthy lodestar. The way to achieve a convincing monetary policy is through the exchange rate route. Theoretically, it would be possible to choose our own free standing exchange rate target. In my view, it would be artificial to do so, because for so long it has been Government policy to join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system when the time is right. In the past I have not thought that the time was right for that.

Rightly or wrongly, the pound has been regarded as a petro-currency and it was thought that movements in the price of oil would be likely to push the pound in the opposite direction from the currency of the other European countries which are not oil producers. It was said that our entry would be destabilising for the European monetary system and difficult for us to sustain. It is said, and I agree, that there would be nothing worse than frequent realignment and rushing over to Brussels at times of crisis.

Recent events have completely changed that position. At last the world believes what the Treasury has been shouting from the tree tops for years—that the role of oil in our economy is not nearly as great as has been universally assumed. In recent years, there have been at least eight studies of the impact of oil prices on the exchange rate. Taken together they seem to show that a 10 per cent. change in oil prices leads to a 3 to 5 per cent. change in the effective rate. Therefore, a 50 per cent. change in oil prices ought to have been expected to lead to a 15 to 25 per cent. change in the exchange rate. In fact, in recent months the price of oil has fallen by nearly 50 per cent., but the effective exchange rate has fallen by only about 5 per cent. On top of that, the current rate against the deutschmark is competitive for our exporters while the dollar rate is high enough not to be inflationary.

Therefore, I conclude that the moment is approaching very rapidly—if it has not already arrived—when we should fully join the European monetary system. I understand the risks of pressure on the pound on political grounds — for example, impending elections which momentarily seem likely to be won by parties other than the Conservative party. However, the risk of that is no greater inside rather than outside the European monetary system. We would have to take corrective action in any event. In the European monetary system there would still be the retention of freedom of action in genuinely exceptional circumstances.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman taken account of the fact that at present the one dominant currency in the European monetary system is the deutschmark? With the introduction of Britain, there would be two powerful currencies operating on slightly different bases, and that could lead to a certain amount of instability.

Mr. Brittan: That was one of my anxieties. However, for the reason that I have just given, I think that recent developments have removed that anxiety and the advantage of once again having a credible monetary policy would be very great. Such a monetary policy would be a tight one. It would reinforce other pressures on industry not to be lax on the pay front. It is clear that such laxness would not lead to the lowering of the exchange rate to bail out industry in order to restore competitiveness in the short term. Industry would have to play its part in the fight for jobs by resisting excessive pay claims. In that way monetary policy would help the battle against unemployment, as would the lower interest rates which would be likely to come about as a result.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Brittan: I hope that my hon. Friend will excuse me, but I am coming to the end of my remarks.

I hope that the hesitancy that I detect in the current statement of monetary policy is caused by the fact that what we are seeing is only a provisional statement and that it will soon be superseded by an approach of the kind that I suggest. I hasten to make it clear that I have no specific reasons for believing that is so. I am expressing a hope. When that happens, the fiscal system and the constructive ingenuity of the Budget which has been so warmly applauded will be complemented by a monetary policy that reinforces the Government's efforts to promote the only kind of economic advance that will endure—an advance that is soundly based and firmly buttressed.

5.58 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): I do not share what appears to be the belief of the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) that if we can find a satisfactory form of monetary measurement we can therefore find the means of manipulating it. As to the advantages of having a fixed exchange rate, I shall arrive at an opposite conclusion from him.

Under the pressure of time, however, I want to restrict myself almost exclusively to one economic phenomenon —the balance of payments. The balance of payments is a very amusing toy to play with. All sorts of arithmetical games can be played with it with great satisfaction and occasionally with some entertainment and instruction. The balance of payments has one delightful quality—that is

[Mr. J. Enoch Powell]

that it balances, is bound to balance, and always must balance, because it is merely a statement of the different motivations with which the same transactions take place within a given period of time. Hence the astonishing conclusion, which people find difficult to absorb, that if one has a surplus on current account, one must therefore inevitably have an equal and opposite deficit on capital account. That is to say—to put it crudely—one must be exporting capital to the value of whatever is the surplus on the balance of payments in which one happens to be rejoicing.

On the subject of the balance of payments, there are two questions that I want to address specifically, one to the Treasury Front Bench and the other to the Opposition Front Bench. It is, of course, a consequence of having a current surplus on the balance of payments that one is exporting capital; and no doubt a considerable factor in the growth of our overseas assets is due to the surplus which we have enjoyed in our trading accounts of the past six years.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer said in his Budget speech:

> "Our net overseas assets have, in fact, risen more than sevenfold from £12 billion at the end of 1979 to almost £90 billion at the end of last year."—[*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 168.]

There is an interesting feature about that statistic. If one totals up our current account surpluses of the past six or seven years, one will not find that they come to anything near the difference between £12 billion and £90 billion. The deduction from this must be that a massive factor in the increase is reinvestment abroad of the profits earned upon overseas investments owned by residents of this country.

The question I want to put to the Opposition Front Bench is this. I understand that it is part of their policy that they will restore control over capital movements. I want to know three things, though essentially they are all part of the same question. First, would they seek to prevent the export of capital from this country? Secondly, would they finish off the job by attempting to secure the repatriation of profits from investments abroad, and thus remove the other factor which was present in the increase to which the Chancellor drew attention? The third but perhaps most important question is this: do the Opposition realise what the effect of that would be upon the balance of payments?

There seems to be the notion that a surplus on our balance of payments is an expendable item, which we are free to invest either in this country or abroad. There is, in fact, no such possibility, for if we do not send that capital abroad we cannot, by definition, have a current surplus on our balance of payments.

Now, although, as I said earlier, the balance of payments is an amusing contraption in an arithmetical sense, in a real sense it is highly complex. We do not really understand the interaction of the various component parts of that balance. Let me take a crude example. We do not know what would be the result of a given increase in exports; do not know whether that would result in an equal increase in our current payments surplus or whether there would be some adjustment in other parts of the account. In particular, we do not know—here I come very much into the real world—how far our experience with the balance of payments has been related to our experience in unemployment.

In Britain today we are meeting with our exports the cost of acquiring all that we find it advantageous to acquire from the outside world, and still are earning a very substantial surplus of payments year in and year out, a surplus that the Chancellor expects to continue. There is a plausible case to be made that that factor — that changeover of the United Kingdom economy from persistent deficit to persistent surplus — may be not unconnected with our difficulty in dealing with the apparently intractable phenomenon of a high statistical level of unemployment, though there are obviously many other factors that also feed into it.

Therefore, it would be right for the Opposition to think — I hope that they can bring the House into their counsels in this matter—about what they intend to do about capital transactions between this country and the outside world. Do they intend to control them, or aim at reducing them to zero? Do they intend to secure the repatriation of the capital that is reinvested abroad? What effect do they think that will have upon the balance of payments, and, through the balance of payments, upon the economy of the country?

Having given the Opposition Front Bench something to think about, I hope, for it is a serious issue, I now refer to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): I have heard the right hon. Gentleman's interesting analysis of the balance of payments many times over the years, but I have never been wholly convinced by it. How, for instance, does he square his analysis with the Japanese experience? For many years the Japanese have combined a large surplus on their balance of payments with full employment at home, but have not always found it necessary to export large quantities of capital. How does the right hon. Gentleman relate that to his analysis?

Mr. Powell: I am sure that the Japanese have found it possible to combine a surplus on their current account with high employment at home. Different economies, at different stages of development and in different circumstances, will differ in that respect. What I cannot believe is that the Japanese have succeeded in achieving in one and the same year a surplus on current account and also a surplus on capital account, which means importing capital at the same time. In fact, they have been buying assets abroad—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Hon. Members are with me on that—and that is what has been enabling the Japanese to maintain their continuing large surplus on current account, which appears, although unaccountably to me, to cause so much anxiety.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Has the right hon. Gentleman taken into account the possibility of industrialisation leading to an increase in the £74 billion of imports that we bring into the country? That could be raw materials, capital goods and such things. Only a 5 per cent. increase would wipe out our balance of payments surplus.

Mr. Powell: I follow the right hon. Gentleman entirely in that I do not think that it is easy to quantify or predict the result of changing a given factor in the balance of payments analysis. Some of the factors which, in

themselves, are inherently negative may turn out, in their repercussions and indirect effects, to be positive overall. To that extent, I agree with the right hon. Gentleman.

I now come to the point that I wish to put to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He said that British industry has the

"opportunity both to increase its exports and to reduce import penetration in the home market."—[*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 169.]

I want to ask him what he thinks the consequences will be if that exhortation, hope or prayer on his part is followed by British industry.

In so far as exports are increased and import penetration in the home market is reduced, no doubt the current account surplus on our overall balance of payments will, other things being equal, be that much greater — we shall have an intensification of the phenomenon which we have experienced in the past six years. Is that what the Chancellor aims at? Is that what he hopes for? What is his analysis of the economic consequences — the consequences in terms, first, of the impact on the balance of payments, and, secondly, the impact upon the economy of that impact on the balance of payments?

I come in haste to the matter with which the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks was dealing — control of the exchange rate. The balance of payments will operate inexorably, whether or not one messes around with the exchange rate. With an exchange rate entirely free to move, with which the Bank of England is not playing any games, still the inexorable logic of the balance of payments will apply. But if one decides upon a fixed exchange rate policy—or an aligned exchange rate, which is effectively another version of the same thing —then, in addition to everything else, one is deciding to add a further factor, namely, the level of the exchange rate, and bring that into the play of forces which determine the composition of the balance of payments.

If one decides to fix the exchange rate, one does so at one's own expense, in two ways: to keep the rate down one manufactures one's own currency and sells it; to push the rate up one borrows other people's currencies and sells that. It is a simple and rather hair-raising game, is rigging the exchange rate. In the end the cost always recoils on the country which does it—either by the consequences of providing currency of its own in order to depress the rate, or by the consequences of the international debt incurred in operations to force the exchange rate up.

The Prime Minister made a sage observation — indeed, it might have been a deep observation—when, responding to a supplementary of mine, she said, referring to the suggestion that we should tie our exchange rate to a norm not within our own control, that had the Government listened to the suggestions earlier

"we would have found ourselves in some difficulty in view of the fluctuation in exchange rates which inevitably comes through having a currency rather different from those in the rest of Europe."—[*Official Report*, 6 March 1986; Vol. 93, c. 444.]

The right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks evidently believes that we have walked out of history. He believes that we have left behind us the period when factors which none of us foresaw, not years before, but only a few weeks before, could alter the balance of supply and demand for sterling. For myself, I cannot believe that the change in economic variables throughout the world which comes home to roost in terms of a movement of the sterling exchange rate lies behind us once and for all and that therefore it would now be painless to attach ourselves to an external norm. I believe that we would still find ourselves paying dearly to maintain that norm, and ultimately at our own cost.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman is under an illusion when he imagines that the stop-go that would result would be an effective measure against inflation. It is true that it has been used in terrorem by Chancellors of the Exchequer. They threatened the economy, which they were themselves inflating, that if it did not behave itself, there would be a balance of payments crisis; but still inflation continued and still the balance of payments crisis had to be met by sudden and sharp adjustments of the rate of exchange.

I agree rather with the right hon. and learned Gentleman's fundamental proposition that the Chancellor of the Exchequer and this Adminstration in general have, by control of public sector borrowing, been utilising the only instrument by which money supply can be increased or controlled or by which inflation can be—to use the rather absurd metaphor—conquered. We would not get any nearer to that by applying the self-punishing mechanism of an externally fixed exchange rate, which would have to be fed in along with all the other factors in the balance of payments.

So I hope that the Government will reflect long and hard upon the philosophy of the Prime Minister's reply, and that we shall continue to enjoy what have proved to be the lasting advantages of an exchange rate which tells us the truth about the worldwide supply and demand for our currency. At least we can do without that additional factor in the already difficult and puzzling make-up of the balance of payments about which both from the Chancellor of the Exchequer and eventually, no doubt after an appropriate period of reflection, from Her Majesty's Opposition I look forward to further enlightenment.

6.14 pm

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) asked the Opposition Front Bench about the repatriation of capital. British pension funds have already been threatened that unless they repatriate some of their capital invested abroad the fiscal advantage will be withdrawn from them. The Opposition policy is clear.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned Japan. He did not mention an additional advantage enjoyed by Japan over many years—its small defence budget. It competes with other economies with defence expenditures amounting to an appreciable amount of GDP.

I think that the Budget is clever and far-sighted. It is not a Budget just for tomorrow. The Chancellor has little room for manoeuvre. He has said that the oil factor in our economy is merely 5 per cent. and that the buoyancy of the other 95 per cent. is real. That is borne out in the figures and the Treasury receipts in January which were about £4·5 billion against a forecast of about £2 billion.

The buoyancy in the economy was too conservatively projected in the Budget last year. As a consequence, the Chancellor had some flexibility, albeit only about £1 billion. He has relieved taxation by that amount. That confounds the doom and gloom prophets. I know that Opposition Members think that this is old hat, but productivity, even in manufacturing, is increasing. Growth in the past five or six years has been sustained. Output, productivity and investment in manufacturing are increasing.

[Sir William Clark]

We should stop talking down the economy. Our economy is extremely buoyant. Ours is not a petro-currency. Opposition Members do the country a disservice in always talking down our economy.

We are accused of wasting oil revenues. Over the years we have received about £50 billion in oil revenues, but, as the right hon. Member for South Down reminded us, our overseas assets have increased by about £78 billion, from £12 billion to £90 billion. That must be good for the future, whether we invest in dividends or whatever. Opposition Members do not realise that if one invests abroad one can look forward to the dividend, but that in many cases the only way to penetrate the overseas market is to acquire subsidiaries. That has certainly happened in America and in Europe. When people question capital going out of the country they must realise that many other countries such as America and Japan invest here. If we become isolationist and decide not to invest abroad, we shall suffer reciprocity.

We should not forget the background to the Budget. Inflation is coming down. People can plan with far more certainty. Inflation was 26 per cent, today it is just over 5 per cent., and it is bound to come down to about 3 or 3·5 per cent. Any increase in employment will be retarded by high wage demands. I hope that industry realises that.

At one time the CBI appeared to be concerned only with the need to reduce interest rates. The one point drop that we have recently enjoyed is excellent and it will give industry a boost of about £250 million, but a one point drop in wage rates would give industry a boost of £1,000 million. That is how we shall secure more research and development and more jobs, and that is why it is essential to keep down wage demands.

I am sure that everyone welcomes the measures in the Budget to improve training. In addition, we have the loan guarantee scheme, the business expansion scheme and the community programme.

I welcome the suggestion that wages should be tied to profitability. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster drew attention to the fact that the long-term unemployed are being interviewed over three, four or five days with a view to their joining or forming job clubs. A few pilot schemes throughout the country have been successful and I understand from my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment that they are to be extended generally. It is interesting to note that there has been some deregistering by the unemployed in some areas where clubs have been formed or introduced.

There are 3·2 million who are unemployed and that is disastrous. I hope that the House will not think that I am trying to denigrate the importance that is attached to reducing unemployment. However, we should ascertain how many of the 3·2 million are looking actively for work. We all know that some have taken early retirement and are not looking for work but are registered as unemployed. Some married women who were in employment are registered as unemployed but are not looking actively for work. If we have 3·2 million drawing benefit, I accept that unemployment is far too high—we must ascertain how many are looking actively for work.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The hon. Gentleman talks about inflation being reduced, but he has not said that unemployment is increasing massively. It is useless to talk to the unemployed, who expect unemployment to increase, as though everything in the garden is glorious and that nothing is wrong. Is it not a fact that the unemployed have been taken out of a sector where they were able to buy products and that if they returned to it they would be able to buy more products? The spiral of unemployment makes things worse all the time. I ask the hon. Gentleman to accept that reality.

Sir William Clark: I cannot understand the hon. Gentleman's logic.

Mr. Flannery: Of course the hon. Gentleman cannot.

Sir William Clark: I should have said that I cannot understand the logicality of the hon. Gentleman's statement. Surely the reduction of inflation is the greatest boon to everyone, whether he or she is on a small income or a large one. It must be better for inflation to decrease rather than increase. Surely that is obvious to anyone.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer told us in his Budget statement that the surplus assets in pension funds will be taxed at 40 per cent. I do not object to that, but I am slightly concerned that the Government Actuary will intervene if the assets of a pension fund are only 5 per cent. more than the fund's liabilities. I am not certain that a surplus of 5 per cent. is a sufficiently high one for the introduction of taxation. I do not agree that the pension funds should hold massive surpluses, but we must not undermine the integrity or the financial stability of occupational pension funds. If the stock market turns down and securities decline, some of the pension funds with a 5 per cent. surplus may be in trouble.

The 11 million occupational pensioners should be aware of what the Opposition have in store for them. As I understand it, a Labour Government would force the institutions—the pension funds—to invest in a national investment bank. The House will recall that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) talked about a national investment bank and investment, but he did not say from where its funds would come. I believe that a good part of the funds will be forced from occupational pension schemes. I have no objection to forced investment if I am satisfied that the person who is to invest my money will do so wisely, but unfortunately the record of most public investment is not all that good. If the funds of the 11 million are to be diverted into a national investment bank and reinvested—no doubt into lame ducks to create jobs, for example—pensioners and their pensions will be put at risk.

The Opposition have threatened that if a Labour Government are returned they will repurchase all the shares that have been bought under our privatisation measures. Of course, a Labour Government would not repurchase the shares that have been bought by small investors. We know that 2 million small investors bought British Telecom shares and we know also that a Labour Government would not wish to upset them. Presumably a Labour Government would repurchase the shares that have been bought by the institutions. Apparently, they will buy them at the same price that the institutions paid for them initially. No allowance will be made for inflation between purchase and repurchase. Similarly, there will be no allowance for any capital growth that has taken place

between purchase and repurchase. Again, this will put at risk the pensions of the 11 million occupational pensioners.

I say to occupational pensioners that they should beware of any Labour Government. I have explained what the Opposition intend to do with their money and their future.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer knows that I am in slight disagreement with him on how we should relieve the burden of taxation. The reduction of the standard rate of tax by 1p, from 30p to 29p, was excellent, and the same can be said of the indexation of the tax thresholds. However, under the new indexation, a married man will start paying tax as soon as he has earned £70 a week. Surely that figure is far too low when the national average wage is slightly more than £180 a week. A priority for any Chancellor of the Exchequer should be to increase thresholds so that half the national average wage becomes the tax threshold for a married man. When that has been achieved, let us deal with the standard rate tax.

The Budget is a continuation of previous measures in that it encourages wider share ownership and the Government's housing policy, which has led to more than 60 per cent. of houses being owner-occupied. There are over 4 million small shareholders, and that number will increase with the introduction of PEP, which I warmly welcome. More help will be given to charities and some of the strain will be taken from the public purse in looking after people through the various charities.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer should be congratulated on the Budget. The exchange rate has been abolished and so has the investment surcharge, along with the tax on jobs which was imposed by the Labour Government in the form of the national insurance surcharge. Development land tax has been abolished and it is time that my right hon. Friend abolished the lifetime gifts tax. As others have said, it is an ingenious Budget. It is also a prudent Budget and it will be welcomed by most of the British people. Furthermore, it is a cautious Budget. I am sure that all my right hon. and hon. Friends look forward to next year's Budget.

6.29 pm

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): I am sure that many hon. Members would agree with the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) that one of the better aspects of the Budget concerned the changes for charities. I welcome those changes, and I am not afraid to say that. However, I take issue with the hon. Member for Croydon, South when he implies that charities could substantially help to alleviate some of the enormous social problems in our country. Charities can set standards, have new ideas and manoeuvre a fresh approach to many issues, but, relative to the global problem regarding the relief that they bring for the many people who need help, their contribution can never be that massive. However, I am willing to agree, enthusiastically, that we should encourage individuals to give money to the charity of their choice and to do that through fiscal measures.

The first major point that I should like to make has already been mentioned—the problem that the economy is currently experiencing regarding unit labour costs. The Chancellor identified that problem during his Budget statement, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) at least managed to make passing reference to it, and the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) made substantial reference to that problem and concluded that we should join the EMS.

I have long taken the view—a view held by the alliance—that we should join the EMS, but those who believe that that will solve unit labour cost problems in splendid and wonderful isolation are misled. It is time that the House applied itself more to the problem of unit labour costs than it has done hitherto. In 1979 we were told that the solution was simple—we should control the money supply. There are few in the House now, even among its original, enthusiastic advocates, who would argue for that idea.

At Budget time it is fair to ask the Government, if they see unit labour costs as one of the great problems affecting the economy—and I would concur with that belief—and if they believed originally that control of the money supply was the solution, to tell us what went wrong with the original policy or what they wish to put in its place. The alliance firmly believes that, unless we can get unit labour costs under reasonable control relative to our competitors, there is no prospect of long-term economic recovery. I am not certain that many in the Treasury would disagree with that diagnosis.

It is interesting to analyse the experience of the average British industrial worker compared with that of the average German industrial worker over the past 20 years. I have been trying to find the precise answer to the following question but have not been successful, although I can give an approximate answer: which group of workers, German industrial or British industrial has, in each year received the largest pay increase? The answer would appear to be something like 16 : 4 or maybe 15 : 5 in favour of the British worker. It is certain that in most of the past 20 years the German industrial worker has received a substantially smaller increase in the monetary value of his pay than his British counterpart. Yet, when one analyses the changes in living standards that have taken place over that time, it shows how lunatic and nonsensical is the obsession with an individual's yearly pay increase.

We must undertake a major propaganda effort to explain that point and make it more widely known. Indeed, as I sit on the alliance Benches and listen to some of the comments from the Labour Benches, it is apparent that we must do a great deal of work on that matter in the House. If we cannot get industrial pay settlements down to a little over the level of inflation, there is no alternative economic scenario which will get people back to work and rebuild our manufacturing base, for which so many people in this House desperately wish.

The Government have occasionally applied their mind to wages. However, they have taken on the easy targets —the ones that least needed attention. There has been much legislation to reduce the pay of the very lowest paid in Britain. The people creating difficulty in that area are not the ones who immediately flash to mind. The Government have put a lot of effort into taking on an easy target because they wish to duck a far more difficult one. It is not the low paid who are causing the problems; rather it is us—and I use the word "us" in a collective sense to describe those of us in the medium to well paid category. We must somehow persuade people in that category to accept pay rises of rather less than they have been getting over the years if we wish to re-establish our employment record and manufacturing base.

[Mr. David Penhaligon]

Even more than that—although this is not absolutely fundamental to the Budget statement, there is an implication for it — we have seen the Government's determined and successful attempt to keep down many of the pay settlements in what I describe in the broadest sense as the Government sector. That is causing a potential explosion of resentment which is gradually building up beneath the Government. It is an explosion of demand and a feeling of outrage which I suspect someone at some time will have to pay for.

Much of the Government's progress on inflation is undoubtedly true and real, and the alliance welcomes that, but much is illusory and not necessarily long-term. It is worth pointing out, when the figures comparing this decade with the last decade are so freely given across the Floor of the House, that at this moment, after all the agony that this country has been through, as far as I am aware, there is only one industrially-based nation which can reasonably be compared to Britain. Only Italy has a higher level of inflation than Great Britain. Italy has an inflation rate two or three points higher than ours. All the other nations have lower inflation levels—not much lower, it is true, but it is worth stressing that. Despite the effort, sacrifices and enormous level of unemployment, so far as I am aware, only one country has a higher level of inflation than ours.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Would the hon. Gentleman care to consider Greece, Portugal and Spain, just to mention three other countries, when he makes those statements?

Mr. Penhaligon: I did say that I was comparing nations roughly equivalent to ourselves. I did not realise that the Government believe that the British economy is now in such a state that we should compare ourselves with Portugal, Spain and Greece. If that is the standard adopted by the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), so be it. However, when comparing ourselves with France, Germany, Holland, Canada, the United States and nearly all the OECD countries with a large manufacturing base, my previous statement is true. If I need to be corrected, there will be opportunities for that to be done.

The alliance's conclusion—which is not popular and may not attract votes but which is important and fundamental and one which we will argue for with vigour — is that there must be some kind of incomes policy within the economy. That policy should preferably be built on the back of consent; if not, on the back of a mandate. In the final analysis, it should be encouraged to work through statutory fiscal pressures.

My next point concerns the penny off income tax. It has been interesting listening to hon. Members speaking about that. In reality, the Chancellor, having adjusted this and that, discovered that he had about £1 billion to spend. That is his judgment. The alliance took another view in the alternative submission that we put to the House, which was published before the Budget and which we were willing to put through the various economic models. That was a brave and unusual thing for an Opposition party to do. It is certainly something that the Labour Front Bench would not dare to do as the computer is likely to say "submit" or "surrender" before it gets through the first six months of the Labour party's proposals. However, we are willing to put our alternative submission to the test. We believe that we could run a slightly bigger PSBR. I do not wish to discuss that point at present. I should just like to accept the Chancellor's analysis of his £1 billion to spend. One can run a PSBR bigger than that, but let us simply accept the Chancellor's statement about that £1 billion.

In current circumstances, on what would the House collectively wish to spend that £1 billion? That is the decision that the Chancellor had to make. The alliance, in its submission, said that it thought that one of the most effective ways of using that money would be to relieve poverty, create jobs and give the manufacturing base some kind of boost. To do that the money could be used to reduce the employers' national insurance contributions. We accept that there are alternatives. One could have argued that some of the money should go to alleviate the poverty that has undoubtedly increased in our society over the past few years, particularly among the unemployed and the retired. One could have argued that some of the money should be used to build up and repair the infrastructure — houses, roads, sewers or whatever. The alliance argued for a combination of the three in its submission.

The Government decided not to do any of those things. They decided that poverty, jobs and the infrastructure were not important. They chose to spend that miserable £1 billion in the least effective way. They decided to reduce income tax by 1p in the pound rather than to rebuild our industry and infrastructure and relieve poverty.

We know from knocking on doors during election campaigns that few constituents would offer to pay more tax. I am constantly amazed when politicians argue to the contrary. But we believe that the 1p in the pound off income tax is a mistake, and to show that we take that seriously we shall seek to divide the House on that matter tonight. We shall vote against that reduction in income tax tonight because we believe that there are other less selfish ways in which that money could be used.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Moore): This is obviously an important issue for the hon. Gentleman's party. Why was not income tax mentioned in the budgetary statement, "Jobs and competitiveness," which his party issued in advance of the Budget?

Mr. Penhaligon: Income tax is mentioned. We said —the Minister will be unfair not to recognise this—that we would valorise tax thresholds and tax levels. If the Minister does not know what that means, he has not read far enough. We made it clear that we would increase thresholds in line with inflation, but—and we were not trying to duck it, deny it or wriggle our way out of it—that we must face the economic reality. We would not have reduced income tax by 1p in the pound in the current situation.

We would not have exempted lifetime gifts from tax altogether. It is an obscenity beyond belief that, as a result of the budget, a parent during his lifetime can give a child £10 million and that massive transfer of wealth would not incur one farthing of tax. Previously, the Chancellor would have taken £3 million.

Politically, the Government will get away with that change because most people do not believe that there are people who have £10 million to give to their children. But those who have been Members of the House for a year or two know jolly well that there are many hon. Members who could afford that. With all the poverty and housing problems that we see, it is staggering that, of all the people

the Treasury could relieve, it has chosen to relieve people with that sort of wealth. We on this Bench do not argue, and never have, that levels of tax should be such that they represent confiscation. The previous level was one third. Plus or minus a bit, that is about right. Frankly, in all decency, someone who has £10 million to give to a child can afford £3 million in tax.

Mr. John Townend: Does not the hon. Gentleman have the problem in his constituency that many other hon. Members have of family businesses being forced to sell out because of capital transfer tax, with the consequent loss of jobs? Does he accept that some of the family businesses that went out of business or sold up in the 1960s and 1970s would have been the seedcorn that would have provided jobs today? Will he at least exempt family businesses?

Mr. Penhaligon: We have not attacked some of the changes in capital transfer tax.

If one takes £10 million——

Sir William Clark: I did not mention £10 million.

Mr. Penhaligon: I know. I am talking about the consequence of the Government's legislation. Farms are the most difficult area in relation to capital transfer tax in areas such as mine. They already have a 50 per cent. exemption on top of the basic rate. A farmer must own a grand-daddy of a farm for it to be worth £10 million, even with the inflated property values that we have today.

Mr. John Townend: £500,000.

Mr. Penhaligon: Oddly enough, one could argue that capital transfer tax started at too low a level at £71,000. That is where it started previously. I have not mentioned the £71,000 level, but I become extremely angry at the net effect of the removal of capital transfer tax from a sum of £10 million.

The lunacy of the Government's position is that the only wealth we now tax is that which is released from its possessor as a result of his unexpected death. No other wealth is taxed. Everybody knows that they will die in the end, and there is plenty of advice that people can take on that. The only people who will pay large-scale capital transfer tax in future are those who die unexpectedly, or, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) said, those who trust the Inland Revenue more than they trust their own relatives.

Mr. Moore: I apologise for intervening again, but it is interesting to learn the policies of the hon. Gentleman's party. How does the hon. Gentleman combine what he has been saying at great length about capital transfer tax—I trust that he will seek the opportunity to vote against this Budget resolution in order to put his party's position on the record—with the fact that in the past seven years, since 1978-79, the proportion of taxation taken in capital taxation has increased from 1·4 per cent. to 1·8 per cent. and in real terms the revenue yield has gone up by 30 per cent?

Mr. Penhaligon: The right hon. Gentleman will certainly reduce that this time. I rather suspect that a fair amount of capital has been transferred in the past few years in the belief that the regime could not conceivably become more favourable. It just shows what mistakes people can make. If only they had hung on a bit longer, they would have paid no tax at all.

The Chancellor is clearly in a difficult financial position. He lost £5 billion from oil and he takes no blame for that. But the Government must be able to stand up and defend why, within the narrow limits for manouevre that they have in this Budget, they have decided to use £1 billion in the way that they have.

Many Conservative Back Benchers, at least on television, attack that change with as much vigour as I do. If there were a secret vote on this among Government Back Benchers, the 1p in the pound reduction in income tax would not receive a majority.

6.47 pm

Mr. Michael Heseltine (Henley): I share the broad approval that has been extended, not only in the House but widely outside, for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's Budget statement which has achieved so many of his central economic aims. Obviously, the Government's prime responsibility to secure control over the economy is self-evident. There is no question whatever that on some of the more important aspects of my right hon. Friend's policy he had a good story to tell. The star of the record was the fact that we now look to the prospect of a 3·5 per cent. rate of inflation. Not even the most enthusiastic Government supporters believed that we would reach such levels as quickly as we have. Without the slightest doubt, falling interest rates and rising output and productivity in an economy that is now growing faster than any comparable economy, with the possible exception of that of Japan, are a remarkable achievement.

We should not lose sight of the fact that part of the growth in output, particularly in manufacturing, is a recovery from a low base but that is now rising and it is part of a growing economy on a consistent year-on-year basis. That is a solid and real achievement. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster was right to draw the attention of the House to the fact that much of the credit for our falling inflation goes to the falling levels of raw materials and changing oil prices, but there is a countervailing force which is much to be deplored. The private sector has been given the most incentive-oriented economy that it ever dreamt it would see, but we are speeding up the potential level of inflation with wage settlements running at nearly double the level of inflation. We shall pay the price for that in lost jobs and lost opportunities as it feeds through into the economy.

Recently, we have benefited considerably from the change in the price of imports and of oil but the private sector is undermining benefits which should accrue to the whole national economy. That is to be deplored.

I agree with the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) that the Government have taken an immensely courageous stand in holding down public sector wage claims for a long time. There is an unhappy contrast between how the public sector has accepted that, with great difficulty and with great stress to the Government, and what is happening in parts of the private sector. Everybody knows that significant real increases in earnings are being achieved by many of those who are in work because pay settlements are so far above the level of inflation. Everybody expected that the steps that the Chancellor would take would lead to a fall in interest rates, but it did not seem self-evident to me that we should further encourage an increase in real living standards for those people by giving them a 1p reduction in the standard rate of income tax.

I was slightly at odds with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—although I agree

[Mr. Michael Heseltine]

with much of what he said—because he did not give quite the right emphasis to the sale of capital assets to finance current consumption increases which a standard rate reduction in tax would tend to stimulate. There is too little awareness that the capacity to go on selling assets is temporary. If one stimulates consumption on the basis of capital asset realisation, one is losing sight of the long-term need to use those capital asset realisations for capital growth and capital stimulation as opposed to enhanced consumption, which we might find difficult to sustain when the ability to realise more capital assets is diminished.

I strongly commend the Chancellor and his predecessor, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, for their consistent efforts to incentivise and stimulate the small business economy. It is impossible to underestimate the scale of present incentives to encourage people to become self-employed, to start their own businesses and to develop those businesses into successful, thriving concerns.

If there is a criticism of previous Governments — there are many, especially of the Labour Government— it is that there was a relatively inflexible economy for far too long. We were not sufficiently innovative and, when the recession came, there was not the wide dispersal of industry and activity which might have protected us from some of the worst excesses of that recession. Recently, however—and this Budget continues the policy—we have created a wide range of incentives which are equal to anything that can be offered anywhere in the world.

I strongly support the Chancellor's determination to build on the philosophical and political strength on which the Government have laid such importance — the spreading of ownership. The property-owning democracy of the 1950s and 1960s, to which the Government have added the enfranchisement of council tenants, has played as decisive a role in changing fundamental attitudes to individual responsibilities as any other single feature of modern society. To extend that into wider share ownership must be the priority. Without the slightest doubt, the Chancellor has taken an important step. I hope that he will accept that it is not the last one. There are other incentives, which could easily be copied from overseas, to give greater thrust to our economy. However, all credit is due to my right hon. Friend for taking that important step in the Budget.

I take issue with the hon. Member for Truro on his attempt to win both ways on the taxation of small family businesses. We quite understand that the principal Opposition party, in its guts, has no sympathy or empathy for the flourishing private sector economy and the private businesses that it creates. It has for generations encouraged the incentivisation that encourages publicly quoted companies to buy up family businesses and thus diminish the provincial power base of the industrial heartlands of Britain.

The tax changes announced by the Chancellor mean that those who create businesses will be able to pass them on to their families or to sell them within the community to which they are important. That is an important part of maintaining the capitalist strength of Britain. Nothing is more harmful, other than nationalisation in which so many Opposition Members believe, than forcing, by considerable fiscal incentives and high capital taxes, family business, to sell out to publicly quoted companies. That is another step towards the centralisation of wealth. The branch officer takes the place of the entrepreneur in provincial Britain. The Chancellor has taken a courageous step in trying to reverse that trend. The Labour party has no interest in encouraging such a thriving capitalist base.

The Liberal party says that it favours a capitalist base for small people, but the moment a company becomes successful it will obliterate the company's ability to remain in business. That is a classic example of the Liberal party not being prepared to stand up for either side of the political argument. If one genuinely wants capitalism and for it to be a rival to the centralising process of Socialism, one must recognise that small businesses will, in many cases, become large. It is far better to leave the ownership of those businesses where they were created and where they are relied on than to centralise them by taxation or other techniques.

From the privacy of Government discussions, the Chancellor is as familiar with my views as I am. If I have one criticism of his Budget it is that it has a discretion which I would rather see used differently. I am aware of the limited opportunities available to the Chancellor, but I would have preferred him to have encouraged more direct investment in and stimulation of the underlying strengths of the manufacturing base. I do not intend to expand on that today. I accept that he was faced with limited opportunities, but he should have taken a more purposeful stride forward towards the stress areas associated with inner city deprivation.

I do not intend to take the time of the House describing the conditions which are now characteristic of inner city Britain and comparing them with the more prosperous suburbs, rural areas and, especially, the south. I am the first to say that in every constituency—even in mine, which is relatively prosperous—there are pockets of poverty and individual cases of tragedy. Those of us who represent the more prosperous parts of Britain cannot honestly say that there is not an unacceptable gap between what we see in the stress areas of the inner cities and the prosperous parts of Britain. That is recognised in the harsh conditions of the inner city stress areas and throughout the British political community.

We do not need an endless parade of more statistics because the conditions in those areas have an eloquence of their own. The Government, as everyone is aware, inherited rapidly rising unemployment from the last Labour Government. It is extraordinary to listen to the Opposition Front Bench. If it is so easy to deal with the problems of unemployment, why did the Labour Government of the late 1970s find it impossible to reverse the then upward trend? The Government inherited about 1 million unemployed, which was a post-war record. The Labour Government had no idea how to reverse or grapple with the unemployment which was permeating through the entire Western world. If Labour does not recognise that basic part of its inheritance, it will never command the respect of the country.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): This is not Blackpool.

Mr. Heseltine: People remember that there were no easy solutions when Labour Members sat on the Treasury

Bench. There are no easy solutions today, and there certainly would be none if, by misjudgment, Labour party Members found themselves back on the Treasury Bench.

We should be frank. Although unemployment is unacceptably high, its level has never been seen to be capable of being cured easily or simply by changing the political party in power. The social, fiscal and economic forces of the 20th century have encouraged generations with wealth and discretion to leave the inner cities. They left behind conditions which are increasingly reminiscent of state-dependent pensioner societies. These are the people who have too few personal resources. They tend to be less well educated, elderly and to have no family support. They are the last group in society to whom we can apply the language of self-reliance and a competitive race in which, by their own abilities, they should somehow succeed. They do not have the personal characteristics with which they can fairly be expected to survive in that rather over-simplistic description of life's forces.

The language of self-help when applied to those communities is something of a delusion. There is growing anxiety about the social imbalances and the consequences that flow from them. Those anxieties grew under the previous Government, as under the present one. When the Government came to power, they rightly refused to increase, or even in some cases to sustain, all of the programmes which affected some of those areas. There was absolutely no case for excluding current programmes of local government from the rigours to which the private sector was being subjected by the recession. Nor was there any reason to exclude local government from the appraisals and the insistence upon greater efficiency to which the Government subjected the national Civil Service. There was no case for setting the bureaucracies of local government apart from that long overdue scrutiny of our national performance. If anybody has the slightest doubt about that, he has only to pick up the latest report of the local government Audit Commission to discover that the figures prove that service after service can be provided at a perfectly acceptable level but at significantly lower cost.

There was absolutely no case for suggesting that restrictive practices and over-manning in inner cities should be set apart from the pressures to which British society was subjected. If there is a point to be made on that score, it is that restrictive practices so close to conditions of harshness were even more culpable because they denied resources to those who needed them most.

The Government experimented across a wide range of policy areas. In their experiments with specific urban programmes, the Government, despite the constraints on public expenditure, substantially increased expenditure in real terms on programmes dealing with the worst hardship.

There were two simple objectives. The first was to try to do something to alleviate the conditions of those who had been left behind in stress areas. That does not add up to a whole policy, however; it merely accepts the inevitability of the historic forces that brought such decline about.

The second and essential objective, which the Government developed as policy, was to try to attract back into the stress areas people who would otherwise remain outside. To widen the basis of society in stress areas, we had to try to attract private investment which would have gone—some still is going—to the suburbs, the green-field sites, and the congested south. We recognised that, to bring a new sense of hope and purpose to stress areas, we had to make them attractive. In a free society, we had to encourage people or to produce incentives to enable people to find a way back — people and investment which would not have chosen to go to those areas otherwise, under any Government.

I shall not list the vast range of grants, programmes and experiments that we conducted, but far and away the most significant and successful is to be found in the east end of London. Through the Urban Development Corporation, we have set about rebuilding the east end of London. It is without doubt one of the most exciting pieces of inner city reclamation in western Europe. Some people talk of the clear divide between the public and the private sector, but I am told that for every £1 of public money going to the east end of London through the UDC, £7 of private money is taking advantage of the opportunity which the public purse created. I saw in *The Times* on Friday a supplement about the north-west of Britain which refers to a land being born again. Virtually every scheme that is referred to in the supplement was born because the Government took public money into the inner cities to create the environment in which larger sums of private money could be attracted. The Government have shown that the public sector can lead and that, where it leads, the private sector will follow, even into the most deprived and needful areas of the country.

My conclusion is therefore clear. We now know what to do and how to do it. It is clear that, to attract back the strengths that have gone during several decades, we must recognise that there is no substitute for the public leadership which clears the dereliction of the Victorian, the Edwardian and, in some cases, the post-war world. No private sector initiative will do it on its own, because this is a loss-making business. There is no profit to be found. Any of us who is asked to advise the private sector whether it should lose money in such endeavours is bound to advise it not to. We must therefore ask whether we leave these vicious circles of despair to continue on their downward journey or whether we will find the resources to clear the dereliction of the past and to make the areas attractive so that, combining public and private endeavour, we can give people there, and the new ones we can attract, a sense of hope and purpose.

It is said that we cannot throw money at these problems. Just what will we throw at them if it is not money? What else will be used to clear up the dereliction? What else will get rid of the appalling squalor in inner cities? I do not mean that we should spend money indiscriminately, but we have now been experimenting for the whole of the decade. If we have learnt nothing, we should be ashamed of ourselves. I believe, however, that we have learnt the answers that we sought. Once we have the answers, it is our responsibility, if the matter is accorded priority, to extend the experiments commensurate to the scale of the problem. It is only the careful balance between the public and the private sectors which can lead us forward as the appalling conditions demand.

In his Budget statement, my right hon. Friend answered the final question which he would be entitled to put to me —where is the money to come from? He reduced the public sector borrowing requirement by £500 million. I do not believe that there was any case for doing that. We have already pursued with great courage a harsh regime to bring the economy back to a condition of which we can be proud and in which it is growing and there is wealth for dispersal.

[Mr. Heseltine]

Even in the discussions and forecasts of the present Government, it has never been considered necessary to reduce the PSBR by another £500 million. Indeed, I believe that we could have increased the PSBR by £500 million and there would have been no difference in the acclaim with which my right hon. Friend's Budget was greeted.

Even if my right hon. Friend insisted on reducing the PSBR by £500 million, and did not accept that it could have been increased, he still had £1 billion. It therefore becomes a matter of balance. We know what to do. The judgment is about priorities. We can stimulate jobs and wealth and recognise the social imbalance that the tensions that I have described have created by leading the private sector—the builders, the investors, the strong, and the able—back into areas of deprivation.

We have to create an urban environment which attracts people to live and invest in it. The chance to stride forward with conviction this year has sadly been missed, but there will be another. It is the privilege of Chancellors that, after one week's recuperation, they begin on the public expenditure round as a prelude to next year's Budget. The process is circular and remorseless and it has familiar characteristics about it.

I hope that my right hon. Friends not represented in the debate today, who would not be the Chancellor's natural allies but who represent the policies that are of central importance in giving new life to the inner city areas, will recognise that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is perceived as having a wider discretion in his hands next year. I hope that, as the public expenditure round that is the prelude to next year's Budget gets under way, all those harrowing stories of how we are not going to make it this time and how the City will not take it and how the pressures on borrowing limits or public expenditure targets are such that there is no room for manoeuvre will, in July and August, somehow miraculously turn out to be an ability to produce tax cuts and PSBR reductions when the Chancellor produces his Budget. I hope that, when all that dialogue goes on, given that there is now more flexibility, there will be a recognition that the Government's task is one not only of economic purpose but of securing a wider social and political purpose which is not compatible with the squalor and hopelessness of inner city Britain.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I remind the House that the 10-minute limit on speeches is now in operation, and I appeal for the co-operation of those who are called.

7.12 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Any Member who represents a constituency in the north-west or any other region cannot fail to agree with the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) about the need for some assistance for the disadvantaged areas.

The right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) said that the Government's monetary policy was not wholly convincing. That is one way to put it. I found the Chancellor almost insultingly dismissive. His infatuation with money supply seems to have come to an end and the theory behind the seven lean years has been dissipated. We should rejoice at the conversion of one whose opinions have hitherto been held very strongly.

The *Financial Times* leader on 21 March said:

"The plain fact concealed by this technical bashfulness is that the monetary policy is by now in an almost total mess."

I do not deplore that. The Chancellor is at last being realistic, and I welcome that note of realism.

This is the first Budget in this Parliament that makes no serious attempt to reduce unemployment. The Chancellor now believes that we have passed the point of no return and that high unemployment will never be materially improved before the next election. He therefore thinks that it is better to spend money not on what he considers to be meaningless measures but on conferring benefits on the better-off, in the hope that they who have gained from the Government might express their gratitude at the next election.

So it is that there remain, and will continue to remain, more favoured parts of the country and more favoured sectors of our national life. It must be emphasised, because this is the cause of the discontent and anger in the north and the other regions, that preference is shown to the south and the City of London, and that this preference is an artificial and Government-made preference due wholly to their policies of a high pound, high interest rates and a contempt for any industrial policy.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) put it well, when he said that the high FT index leads to short-term profits to prevent takeover bids coming in, as unwelcome as they are. So we sacrifice the long-term investment and expansion for the short-term profits that are a direct consequence of the actions of the City of London. Such thinking lies behind the paucity even of sops to the unemployed. We have had statistical tricks and deceptions designed to delude us into believing what is unbelievable—that unemployment is not worsening.

It is easy to remove people from the unemployment register on the grounds that they are not really looking for work, as the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) pointed out. We know that the higher the levels of unemployment, the more pointless it is for many of the 500,000 unemployed for more than three years to continue the charade of searching for employment. The higher the levels of unemployment, the higher the number of those who genuinely cannot find work and so give up looking for it.

The Chancellor's action on capital transfer tax is one of the most disgraceful parts of the Budget. It is a shameful proposal. The Chancellor has replaced what was a useful tax with a voluntary donation payable only by the miser or the negligent. The principles of the tax were sensible and equitable. The enjoyment of the capital that an individual creates for himself is the right of that individual. It is for him to enjoy the wealth that he has created. The enjoyment of capital by virtue of birth has long been regarded as eminently suitable for high and enforceable taxation. That was the basis of the death duties when they were first introduced, of estate duties and, more recently, of the capital transfer tax.

The approach had been to make enforceable that which had been avoided. Under the Government, the tax has been emasculated, first by the reduction in the rates of tax, particularly on lifetime gifts, and then by the 10-year rule whereby one starts all over again every 10 years. Now, we

are back to a tax made even more optional because of the greater sophistication of the insurance market. The Chancellor will be taxing only those who were improvident or over-cautious in not divesting themselves of their wealth. Those who repent of their lack of foresight and endeavour to make hurried gifts towards the end of their lives will be penalised.

The Chancellor has decided that the period of repentance should be fixed at seven years, but insurance companies are even now gearing themselves to cover the seven-year rule. So sophisticated are the new instruments that will be devised that there will be virtual freedom from capital transfer tax, as it is now, or inheritance tax as it will be called, for those who are even remotely well advised.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer prides himself on abolishing certain taxes and reducing others. He prides himself on abolishing investment income surcharge, development land tax and national insurance surcharge, which was created when circumstances were different. Then there were high levels of employment and demand was overheating, but we now have quite different problems of unemployment and the need to increase subsidies.

The Chancellor prides himself on abolishing the capital transfer tax. He has reduced the higher levels of income tax and he is equivocating about the capital gains tax, which may be the next one for abolition—after all, it now brings in less than stamp duty, which the Chancellor has cut in half. The investment income surcharge abandoned the distinction between earned and unearned income — the right and proper distinction that all previous Governments had accepted. There is a difference. There are costs associated with the earning of income such as travel to work, meals out, clothing and so on. There is also the underlying security of capital compared with the insecurity of employment, particularly now.

The Chancellor also abolished the development land tax, which attempted to tax development values created by the community. Its disappearance is yet another bonus to the wealthy. Truly, the rich have never had it so good.

Like many in the debate, I take issue with the Chancellor on belittling the value of oil to our economy. Rarely has the beneficiary of great good fortune been so contemptuous of that good fortune. Having won the pools, he claims that his success is due to his merit, and because he has squandered the oil revenues on the high exchange rates that damaged our industry, brought in imports and allowed the avoidance of any balance of payment difficulties, there has been postponement of any attempt to rectify our underlying weakness. How does the Chancellor think that France, Germany or Japan would have dealt with large oil revenues? Are they a good thing or a bad thing? They would have transformed their economies, which were good enough even before that.

But, most importantly, the balance of payments has been the constricting aspect of our economy in all the post-war years. It has been a dominant factor in all of those 35 years. Stop-go was due not to overheating but to balance of payments difficulties and the holding of a reserve currency. What would Rab Butler and Reg Maudling have done if, at a stroke, they had found themselves relieved of these balance of payments problems?

Oil is of enormous importance and its price is also important to us. We should have a view about the price that we are able to obtain for our products. We sell oil cheaply because of an ideology. But a trading nation should not be able to afford an ideology when it comes to something so important to us. Consequently, we should speak to OPEC and should try to get what we can for our assets. Having obtained it, we should put that money to good use in industry, in the deprived areas of our country and in the expansion of our manufacturing base. That is how we should use it, and that is how we should proceed.

7.20 pm

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): I should like to use 30 seconds of the 10 minutes allotted to me to comment on the speeches of the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) and of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). I take much of what my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley said, especially as I have been a leader in one of the deprived inner city areas, but the most successful experiments have been controlled by central Government with central Government money. I believe that he should bear that point in mind. I treat the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne as a right hon. Friend, but he is a far better Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee than he is a Budget analyst.

The Budget was highly creative. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has managed to squeeze virtually a quart out of a pint pot. I thank him for his provisions on charities. I need say no more than thank you. It was good work; well done. We have made a good start on the share owning democracy with the personal equity plan proposals, but it is only a start. I also say well done for the 1p cut in the standard rate. Whatever colleagues may feel, all the evidence shows that cutting taxes is the best way of boosting long-term jobs and of reducing unemployment.

I repudiate the idea that tax cuts are in conflict with job creation. Although Government expenditure on subsidised jobs may, and I hope will, lead to short-term results, new jobs that are financially self-supporting in the long term have to satisfy market demand. Tax cuts remain the most effective way of increasing that demand.

I am not sure whether the Budget is stimulative or restrictive. At the end of the debate, perhaps I may be told how my right hon. Friend the Chancellor sees it. For example, there is a PSBR of £7 billion with, in addition, £4·25 billion of public asset sales compared with £2·5 billion last year. An analysis of that would suggest that it is a stimulative Budget. But we have lost £5·5 billion of oil revenues, which have to be allowed for in any calculation. Consequently, in a sense, one could say that it is a restrictive Budget. I am not sure whether it is stimulative or restrictive, and commentators in the City are none too sure either.

I query why my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is so coy about fixed capital expenditure. After all, major items of capital expenditure such as the Channel tunnel, Stansted and all the activities, for example, in the east of London were previously substantially just public sector investment. But now there is a mixture. So my right hon. Friend the Chancellor did his cause a slight disservice in not trumpeting the success of that mixed investment. However, I am slightly worried that if interest rates do not fall they may restrict the growth of future capital investment.

I am also worried about North sea oil. It is fortuitous that most of the rig contracts are on a one to two-year basis, so my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has a little

[Mr. Michael Morris]

time in which to make suitable adjustments. Although it was right to have windfall taxes when oil prices were in the high $30, it must be recognised that we are not likely to return to such figures. The marginal cost in the North sea is perhaps $20 a barrel, and even that seems hardly attainable in the near future. In the United States there is an automatic adjustment below $20 a barrel in terms of the removal of windfall taxes. The North sea is important not only to Aberdeen but to a whole plethora of companies in the midlands, and I hope that my right hon. Friend will ensure that the tax element is not too restrictive.

British Leyland has already been mentioned. It is not for me to dwell on who initiated the discussions with General Motors. However, it might be a subject for the PAC to consider. Nevertheless, I am sure that Land Rover should be sold to the management. It is not surprising that that company should have suffered; it has been deprived of investment resources for 12 to 15 years. Leyland Trucks reputedly has the best product line in Europe, while Bedford trucks reputedly has the worst. One might reflect that Leyland could take over Bedford trucks rather than the reverse.

Last year's Budget was a "Budget for jobs." Any job stimulation takes time to work through. I can speak only for the east midlands, which is my part of England, but unemployment in Northampton is now falling to less than 10 per cent. Last Tuesday, I was somewhat dumbfounded to hear the Leader of the Opposition say:

> "The expansion of the jobs clubs for advice is more a taunt than a support for the unemployed. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, who must be acquainted with the facts, must know that people will regard that as nothing more than an additional opportunity to have a chat and a cup of tea. In some ways that is an advantage in itself, because unemployment can be an extremely lonely condition, but that is about as far as it goes". —[*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 186.]

On the following day, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) mixed up the job start allowance scheme and job clubs. It was quite obvious that he did not understand the difference between the two, and had never visited any of the trial areas. It is not good enough for Opposition spokesmen to criticise such new dimensions when they do not even know what they are all about.

There have been 30 experiments on job clubs. One of those experiments is in Northampton. In about six months we have handled well over 100 applicants from among the long-term unemployed, and of those 65 per cent. have found long-term jobs. It is not just a cup of tea and a chat. People have to come on four mornings a week for two weeks. They are given help in how to apply for jobs and are given free telephone calls, mock interviews, help with their curricula vitae, postage facilities, a room with a typewriter and a room with photocopying equipment. Indeed, they are given general help with how to get a job.

The public has a great deal more confidence in a Government who carry out pilot schemes which, when found successful, as the job club has been in Northampton, are then introduced nationally than it has in the Leader of the Opposition or in the Opposition's economic spokesman. Those right hon. Gentlemen do not understand the difference between job clubs and job starts and cannot be bothered to visit them.

This is a creative Budget. We have two more to come in this Parliament in 1987 and 1988 and I look forward to a 25 pence standard rate of income tax in that time. The economy is growing and inflation is falling, and because of that we will see a considerable reduction in unemployment.

7.31 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): I must declare an interest as president of ASTMS. That gives me an opportunity to say that we recently won the political fund ballot by a massive majority. That will not bring any joy to the faces of Members on the Government Benches, but it is certainly good news for the Opposition.

The Budget is totally irrelevant and has nothing whatever to do with the problems that are facing us. As has been said several times, despite the drop in oil prices, the Chancellor has suddenly found that he has £1 billion to give away. To whom did he give that money? Did he give it to the people who are facing problems, to the poor or to the unemployed? Did he use it for the benefit of manufacturing industry? He did not. He used it to reward those who already have quite a lot of money anyway, to reward the wealthy.

The penny reduction in income tax will benefit those who earn the most. What is the business expansion scheme? It means that the rich can use their dividend windfalls, the rebates from the taxman, to invest or gamble in schemes which are supposedly for small businesses. Even the Chancellor had to admit that a lot of money will go into farmland and development. The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligan) talked about the abolition of the tax on lifetime gifts. That scheme is a scandal. What relevance does it have to industrial constituencies like mine in the north? What relevance does it have to the problems of Merseyside, to the north-east, to Scotland or to Wales? What relevance does it have to the impoverished north as against the prosperous south? It has none whatever. It will not begin to solve any problems.

I am sorry that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is not here. He introduced the debate in his usual manner of the Chingford charm school. His method is to denigrate his opponents, to be short on facts, to say nothing about Government policy and to present it overall with the manners of a house-trained aardvark. He has not changed at all. His chief topic was inflation. As has been reasonably said, our inflation rate is still higher than the inflation rates of our competitors. It is higher than the rates in Japan, the United States, Canada, France and West Germany. What a price we have had to pay for getting inflation down. We in the north and the unemployed have had to pay that price. Nothing in the Budget will do anything for the unemployed.

The Chancellor missed a great opportunity because he could have used that £1 billion to stimulate employment. He could have used it for public works and to develop our infrastructure. The right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) talked about the inner cities, but regenerating the inner cities means far more than giving Liverpool a garden centre. It is about building houses which the council in Liverpool has been trying hard to do in face of all the restrictions. It is about building the roads and the docks that we need and about building schools and hospitals. Schemes like that would provide real jobs.

The Government have no strategy for industry. They are quite happy to rely on privatisation and to try to bring about mergers that have collapsed. That happened in the case of General Motors and Leyland Vehicles. We look

forward to hearing the facts when they come out and learn what part the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster played in that. Apparently, he initiated it and then advised against it. The Government have allowed the American company Sikorsky to take a stake in our only independent helicopter manufacturer. As we have seen, the trade unions there which supported the employers are now paying for that support because we now see Westland withdrawing recognition from the foremen and chargehands at Weston-super-Mare. Because of the American influence, will we see a non-union company develop at Westland?

The amount of money sloshing about in the City has given rise to a spate of mergers. There is a proposed merger between Allied-Lyons and Elders IXL. We have seen the bid for the Distillers Company, first by Gulliver and then by Guinness, and there has been an attempt by GEC to take over Plessey. What relevance has that for employment? The spate of takeovers will lead to asset stripping, and unemployment will grow. The Government are not prepared to do anything about any of those things. The Budget should have been used to develop an industrial strategy, but all that it does is react too late to the needs of industry and crisis piles upon crisis.

The Government have no policy, and it is not just the Opposition who are saying that they ought to have a policy for industrial regeneration, because voices are also being raised on the Government side. I wish that some of the people saying that the Government ought to have a fiscal policy to begin to regenerate industry had been giving the same message when they were in Cabinet. We seem to hear them only when they resign. As the number of resignations from the Government grow, so the number of voices grow that say we ought to do something about the regeneration of industry. Nothing is done.

The only thing talked about by most Conservative Members who have spoken is the benefit that will accrue to the City, the benefits that will accrue to those who have and who are not interested in British manufacturing industry, but are more likely to invest in manufacturing industry in rival companies in Japan or the United States or in the developing world. Those pople are not interested in regenerating British industry or in creating prosperity.

The Government ought to use their fiscal policy to ensure that the banks, the insurance companies and the City institutions invest in British industry. Failure to do that will mean that not only will more and more people join the ranks of the unemployed, but we will also become a low tech country. The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) said the rate of inflation in Greece is higher than ours. That is the level to which Conservative Members are prepared to stoop. They believe that in industrial terms we can be compared to Greece and Portugal. I am happy to say that there are others with more vision, but we cannot expect vision from a Government who are leaderless, rudderless and powerless to stop the ship of state drifting on to the rocks of destruction.

The sooner this Government make way for a Government who are prepared to put the interests of the British people first, especially those of the ordinary people, the better. The sooner the Government end the great divide between north and south, the better. Instead of confrontation, there should be compassion. We should use all our resources to bring people together. We should begin to rebuild the base of manufacturing industry on which the Government were created. We should be assisting the new industries of the future. Although this Government will not do that, I hope that we shall not have to wait three years before it is done by a new Government.

7.40 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Nearly seven years ago, my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) arrived for the first time at Treasury Chambers. He found as Chancellor of the Exchequer my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) who is now Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. In the early months of 1980, the then Chancellor and the then Financial Secretary established for the then Government and their successor what is described as the medium-term financial strategy. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor for the consistency and persistency of purpose which he and his predecessor have shown in managing our economy during the past seven years. Consistency and persistency in economic policy have been tragically lacking in the fashioning of British economic policy since the war.

When my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) formed his Administration on 18 June 1970, it was not his intention that we should pursue a statutory prices and incomes policy. It was not his intention that there should be a dramatic increase in the money supply in the closing years of his Administration. It was not the Labour party's policy, when it came into power in the early days of March 1974, that, before barely two years were out, it should go cap in hand to the International Monetary Fund and reverse some, although not all, of the disastrous policies which it had been pursuing in the two preceding years.

What has marked out this Government, not only from the two whom I have mentioned but from all previous Governments since the war, is that we have had consistency of purpose. Consistency of purpose offers for the British people not only the best prospect of economic growth but the best long-term prospect of creating more jobs.

The shadow Chancellor for the Liberal party—the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon)—is not in his place, but the solitary representative of the Liberal party, the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), is welcome. We listened with considerable interest to the hon. Member for Truro tell us that, if we had a Liberal Chancellor, there would be a prices and incomes policy with statutory back-up.

Mr. Richard Ryder (Mid-Norfolk): He did not explain.

Mr. Gow: My hon. Friend is right. Who ever heard a Liberal explain anything with cogency or conviction?

On the second day of the Budget debate the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was challenged, wisely, by my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) on what would be the public sector borrowing requirement if the right hon. Gentleman happened to be in Great George street. The right hon. Gentleman replied:

"I shall give the figure in a moment."

He said that the amount would be considerably more. He continued:

"Before dealing precisely and directly with the question of the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples), I must deal with the Government's plans for tackling the unemployment crisis."—[*Official Report*, 19 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 309.]

[Mr. Gow]

Did the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook do what he had promised and deal precisely and directly with the question? He did not. I hope that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) will answer the question that his right hon. Friend did not answer.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) said that he thought that this year's PSBR could be £500 million more than the £7 billion figure which has been wisely chosen by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley is entitled to put forward that view—the target of the PSBR is a matter of judgment. I do not believe that, if we had taken a more relaxed view about the PSBR, we would have shown consistency of purpose during the successive dramas of the Falklands war, the miners' strike and the dramatic reduction not only in the price of oil but in the revenue from oil.

I believe that the level of the PSBR has a crucial influence on interest rates. No one is a keener advocate of lower interest rates than my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley. He is the first person to say that we must encourage our industrial manufacturing base. I believe that the surest way in which we can encourage our manufacturing industry is by following that policy of sound money and honest finance which is the best prospect of reducing interest rates.

If I praise my right hon. Friend the Chancellor for his cautious and prudent Budget, I praise him also for his new imaginative scheme to encourage the wider ownership of shares. Nothing has caused greater happiness among Conservative Members than the way in which, since my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister arrived at Downing street, between 925,000 and 950,000 people—it will be more than 1 million people by the time of the next Budget—whom the Labour party wanted to keep as tenants in perpetuity in the public sector have become home owners. I see a former Minister for Housing and Construction—the right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson)—in his place.

Mr. Winnick: What about private tenants?

Mr. Gow: The hon. Gentleman should contain himself. He may get a chance to catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I ask the hon. Gentleman to remain silent.

This increase in home ownership has become accepted by some Labour Members. At the next election, there will not be the same commitment by the Labour party as there was at the last election to repeal our Acts of 1980 and 1984. They may seek to amend them but they will not repeal them. In the past seven years, we have moved the centre of British politics to the right. I predict that the Labour party is fearful lest our new plans for encouraging share ownership should prove to be as popular with the people as was our policy of offering them choice. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor, in extending the opportunities for share ownership, wishes to extend opportunities and choice ever more widely. This is really the people's Budget—*[Laughter.]* Do you remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Labour party laughed when we promised that we would give tenants the opportunity to become owners? Today the Labour party laughs when we are giving to others the opportunity to become owners of capital—an opportunity that they would never have had before.

We have heard from Labour Members and even from the spokesman—now vanished—for the Liberal party that if only the Government would spend more money we would be able to abate what, by common consent, is the tragedy of unemployment. The Labour party should remember its own record of public expenditure and the consequences of that irresponsible expenditure: high interest rates and high inflation. It was those interest rates, that high inflation and that excessive borrowing—often undertaken in the name of compassion—that laid the fearful grounds of avoidable unemployment. In the longer term it is essential that the Government should persevere in their policy of lower borrowing, lower interest rates and insisting that this country, like others, should get rid of overmanning. Only in that way will we have a better prospect of more jobs in the future.

I repeat my congratulations to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and look forward to another two Budgets in this Parliament.

7.51 pm

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): If the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) describes last week's Budget as a people's Budget, he will find that it will not be only Opposition Members who laugh.

The hon. Gentleman referred to wider share ownership. I shall not argue about whether or not that would be a good aim. However, we have heard about the 2 million people who bought shares in British Telecom. I am fairly confident that in two or three years that number will have been drastically reduced and the shares will be in the hands of the big institutions.

In opening the debate, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster referred to difficulties inherited from the Labour Government. I am not here to defend the Labour Government or to argue about whether those charges were correct, but the present Government have now been in power for seven years and they cannot continue, year after year, to say that they are not responsible. A time must come when they must take responsibility for the state of the country.

Most people looked to the Budget for a two-pronged attack on unemployment and poverty. Last Tuesday, the Chancellor made no claim to attack either problem. Had he done so, the claim would have been impossible to sustain. When we remember what happened to the unemployment figures after the right hon. Gentleman announced a Budget for jobs, perhaps it is just as well that he made no similar claim on this occasion.

The Budget resembled a gift of little value well presented in a nice package. The Chancellor's casual and frivolous comment on the prospect of the other half of the oil revenue disappearing over the next 25 years seemed to me to be complacent and irresponsible. Had it not been for the oil revenues in recent years, the United Kingdom might well have been obliged to file its petition in bankruptcy.

The tax on petrol will have serious repercussions, particularly in Scotland where petrol is generally dearer than in the rest of the country and where rural areas and islands are dependent on road transport. If the right hon. Gentleman really believes that the oil companies should

absorb the new tax, he should take the necessary action to oblige them to do so. Those hungry hyenas will not co-operate with him otherwise.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne was pleased with the personal equity plan, which allows for relief of taxes on investments of £50 per week. With the appalling unemployment figures and widespread poverty, most of our fellow citizens will regard that measure as a joke in poor taste. Many of them do not have that amount to live on. Even from the capitalist viewpoint, I gather that if one lifts the shares when the stock market is dropping, the tax relief will not be forthcoming.

I welcome the action taken on charities. At last the iniquitous VAT on distress alarms, welfare vehicles for the disabled and so on is to be removed. It should never have been imposed. I also welcome the relief on employee donations to charities and the relief to companies on one-off gifts, which should be of substantial help to many worthy and needy causes. I am sure that that aspect of the Budget will receive universal approval.

I also support the increased duty on cigarette tobacco. As a pipe smoker I should declare an interest, but I agree that tobacco in general is a legitimate object for raising revenue, with improved health as a bonus—although I suspect the Chancellor would be taken aback if everyone gave up tobacco at the same time.

The wealthy section of society has been handed substantial increments by the abolition of tax on lifetime gifts. I agree with the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) that it is a disgrace that that tax should be abolished at such a time. When one thinks of the lack of funds for the universities, the cutting of student grants and so on, the abolition of that tax is iniquitous.

The reduction of a penny in income tax is gimmickry. Everyone wants more money, but the Prime Minister and the Chancellor evidently believe that people are all hungry materialists with no higher aim in life than a reduction in income tax. The Government boast about the reduction in income tax, but the same Government imposed 15 per cent. VAT on almost all goods and services. In my view, many people would forgo tax reductions if that helped the unemployed and the old-age pensioners who have suffered severely this winter. The money could be better used in providing schools, hospitals and houses. Our housing stock is a serious problem that some Government will have to face in four or five years.

It is nonsense to reduce income tax when the Health Service is in dire straits. The DHSS quotes statistics about more doctors and nurses but the public knows that the Health Service and the hospitals are at crisis point. That penny could have been used for education, for the universities, or for improving student grants. I and my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) will join the alliance in voting against the reduction in income tax. Even British business puts tax cuts far behind help for the unemployed in its list of priorities. The Government might have taken their friends' view into account.

The Budget was a political, not an economic, one. I hope and believe that the Government will pay the political price.

7.58 pm

Sir Julian Ridsdale (Harwich): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on a prudent and cautious Budget. Looking after the country's finances is no different from looking after the finances of a family. At times one has to be cruel to be kind. It is not easy to restrain Government expenditure, especially when unemployment is rising so severely, and when we are already spending about £2·5 billion on employment and training measures in 1986, increasing to nearly £3 billion in 1988. However, let us remember that every £100 million spent on employment measures comes from other businesses and other people in employment. Squeeze them too hard by higher taxes or higher interest rates and one destroys hundreds of thousands of jobs that would otherwise be lasting jobs.

That is why I have supported all along the restraints on Government spending, which I am glad to underline have now got us to the position where my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is able to reduce interest rates and point to a growth rate this year of 3 per cent.—1 per cent. more than is estimated this year for Japan—with inflation moving, I hope, somewhere near that figure, too.

We hear a lot about industrial planning and helping industry, but from my visits to industry—especially recently to the exciting KTM factory in Brighton, part of the Vickers Group which is making machine centres—I find general agreement that the best way for the Government to help manufacturing industry is by lowering interest rates and working for stable exchange rates. As my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) said, we are unable to reduce interest rates unless we have a stable public sector borrowing requirement. That is why I join him in being nervous about some of the luxuries that at this moment my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) wishes to have.

In my view, at the moment we must take care of our international competitiveness which is being threatened by the United Kingdom paying higher increases in wages than West Germany, Japan or the United States, which are helped by far lower tax bases than we have.

The Social Democratic party and the Liberal party oppose the reduction of 1p in the basic rate of income tax, yet, to quote from the speech of the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) in the debate on 20 March:

> "In recent years, unit labour costs in Britain have continued to increase consistently compared with the costs of our major competitors. That must stop."—[*Official Report*, 20 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 462.]

I agree with what he says, but surely the Budget helps in this respect. Everybody agrees that the single person earning £140 a week—that is the average wage in my constituency—is paying too much tax. I admit that I thought that that person would benefit from higher thresholds rather than from the basic rate reduction in income tax. On the contrary, as my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury told us on 19 March, that person will gain a 95p a week reduction in the basic rate, compared with 69p a week for an equal cost increase in allowances.

I am glad that those people will have £1·70 more in their pay packets as a direct result of the Budget. For a married couple on average earnings, the figure is £2·59 a week. For the employee on average earnings, the reduction in the basic rate, plus the increase in thresholds, is the equivalent of an increase of £4 a week in gross pay. I am surprised that although the Liberal party and the Social Democratic party are complaining about Britain's international

[Sir Julian Ridsdale]

competitiveness they complain when the Government take 1p off the basic rate of income tax, which will help to alleviate this problem, and yet intend to oppose it in the Lobby.

This pay increase does not damage the competitiveness of British industry and does not put other people's job, or that employee's job, at risk. As the Chancellor said, this is a springboard Budget for making our industry more competitive, but with limited resources available this year because of the £5 billion spent on the miners' strike last year and the £6 billion fall in oil revenues—lost because of the change in the oil price. I hope that we can have more meaningful tax reductions from the springboard that the Chancellor has put in place, because that is the best way to stop our international uncompetitiveness. That is why I am so surprised that the Social Democratic party and the Liberal party do not see this.

Finally, I turn to the wild promises of the Labour party which have been costed at £24 billion, with promises of £3·5 billion extra for pensioners. It all sounds so like a repeat of the disastrous policies between 1974 and 1979 that led to runaway inflation and the erosion of the lifetime savings of so many pensioners. Nevertheless, I should be wrong if I did not point to the 18·9 per cent. increase in rates which we are having to face in Essex this year and to the heavy heating bills that pensioners are having to face because of the severe winter. Proper indexation of income thresholds for pensioners in the Budget will help, but I would urge the Government to do more ahead of the promised reform of local government finance to help pensioners because they have been so badly hit by these large rate increases.

Surely there is no better way of doing that than by giving next year a very generous Christmas bonus as a dividend to pensioners to share in our growing prosperity, to assess the present Labour promises and to remind pensioners that twice the Labour Government cut the Christmas bonus in those disastrous days between 1974 and 1979. Compared with those days, Britain is back on the rails and heading towards an age of prosperity. But let us make no mistake. We shall have that age of prosperity only if we keep a Conservative Government in power.

8.7 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a number of occasions this evening hon. Members have referred to previous Labour Governments. I want to make one clear statement and then say no more about it. Whenever Labour Governments have made mistakes, they made them because they were following the type of policies that had been set down by members of the Conservative party. In other words, they accepted Conservative ideas rather than Socialist ideas. That is why Labour Governments have made some fairly serious mistakes from time to time. When I have been in the House I have said so. I trust that a future Labour Government will not make the kind of mistakes that Labour Governments made in the past.

It has also been said many times during the course of this debate that the problem is that workers earn too high wages. In an exchange with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster I said that this is the old, old story. I first heard it when I was six or seven years of age. I did not understand then what it was all about. However, I have always been told that our economic problems are due to the fact that the awful working people earn too much and that if only their wages were cut everything would be all right. The problem is that when their wages are cut, as happens in areas of high unemployment—for example, on Merseyside and elsewhere—it does not lead to an increase in employment. All it does is to depress the condition of the people and make the situation worse.

The best thing that I read about the Budget appeared in yesterday's edition of *The Observer*. I am not reading *The Sunday Times* at the moment, so I read *The Observer* with even greater interest. What did *The Observer* say yesterday? It said:

"There is a very British feeling in the land at the moment that enough has been done for the rich. Now should have been the time to ease the pain a little at the lower end . . . There is, too, a feeling that the money being made in the City is unseemly, that it is industry and jobs that matter and should be assisted. There was no need for the Chancellor to play silly games over a penny off income tax, less-than-expected increases on petrol, and nothing on beer or whisky."

The article ends with this statement:

"As Lord King commented, it is she who is in charge. And that means—goodnight, nurse. You are a fool to believe that public service or fair play matter. This is the day of the speculator and the inheritor, the greed of the oil companies and the slickness of the City operators. This is Mrs. Thatcher's Britain, 1986."

That is what the Budget is about. It is a rich man's Budget. It helps the rich but does not help the poor.

Also in *The Observer*—I am sorry to keep quoting *The Observer* but I think that it is of interest—there is the following:

"The Chancellor signally failed to provide any specific help for the country's poorest families. They did not even earn a mention in his speech, and welfare groups are bitter."

I should think that they are bitter because the people who gain—and it gives all the figures in the newspaper—are once again the higher income groups in this country. The ordinary working people and those who are not working have once again suffered under this Budget because it is in line with the ideological position of the Government. The Government are a very ideological Government. They believe that the capitalist system is the best of all systems. They ignore the fact that it is crumbling around their ears and that there is increased unemployment, poverty and misery amongst people. All they see is increased profits for some people and they believe that that proves what a successful society we have. We are in this position precisely because we have a capitalist economy with a capitalist Government carrying out capitalist policies.

I have no hesitation in saying that the only real answer is Socialist policies. I get a little upset when I hear some people from my party apologising for our past policies and for our Socialist concepts. I do not apologise for them and I never will. I well remember what the 1945 general election manifesto said. It was a grand manifesto. We should think of what happened at that time and the crisis that the people of this country had to face. The soldiers, airmen and sailors were coming back from the war. There was a danger that we would have a problem similar to that which occurred after the first world war with an immediate increase in mass unemployment. That was not the case. We did not have mass unemployment. The Government dealt with the problem and they did not drop their policies such as public ownership. They took into public ownership a whole series of industries, introduced a National Health Service and created the welfare state. They laid the basis for the society we have had since 1945.

I say to my comrades on the Front Bench—[HON. MEMBERS: "Comrades?"] Yes, comrades. I say to them, do not be mesmerised like rabbits in front of the Thatcher stoat. The way to handle the Thatcher stoat is to deal with it positively and get rid of it. The answer is to carry out the sort of policies that were carried out in 1945, which are still basically the policies of my party. That is the way to deal with the crisis. The Budget is a disgrace and a disaster. It is a Budget for the rich and at the next election we shall have a change in Government. That Government will reverse the whole policy, trend and system we have been suffering under for the past few years.

8.13 pm

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): There is no doubt that falling oil prices have presented British industry with an outstanding opportunity to increase its exports, win a larger share of world markets and orders for jobs. As the Chancellor made clear in his Budget speech, industry

"will only be able to seize that opportunity if it meets two conditions. First, it must keep firmer control of its labour costs. Secondly, it must spend more of its much healthier level of profits on investing for the future in research and development and in training."—[*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 169.]

I want to consider those points because I believe that they are critical to whether we succeed as a competitive trading nation.

For a long time Conservative Members have spoken about the responsibilities of trade unions. I believe that it is imperative that we now alert the nation to the responsibilities of employers, particularly the importance of industry and employers controlling wage costs, and investing in research and development and training. I believe that those three items are conditions precedent to our sustaining success into the 21st century.

In January the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development published a survey which focused on our labour market since 1979. It found that in Britain the failure of wages to adjust to lower inflation and increasing unemployment was at the core of our unemployment difficulties. Further, the OECD considered that the failure of Britain to moderate wages ruled out the option of any general reflation of the economy to reduce unemployment because it concluded that, without greater wage moderation, any stimulus to demand would simply be dissipated in higher inflation.

The OECD further found that in other developed countries higher unemployment had led to a downward pressure on wages, in stark contrast to Britain, where earnings have continued to rise steeply irrespective of unemployment levels. In those circumstances, the OECD concluded, pessimistically, that there is little that macroeconomic policy can do to reduce unemployment.

None of that should come as any surprise. Only last summer the House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade published its findings. It asked its statistical staff to produce figures for unit labour costs for manufacturing in Britain and elsewhere. It found that since 1962 labour costs per unit of output in America had hardly doubled, in West Germany they had slightly less than doubled, in France they rose four times, but in Britain they had risen six times.

The simple fact is that in those countries we consider to be the most well off—for example, West Germany and the United States—the rise in wage costs has been the smallest. Indeed, in 1984 real average earnings in the United States were lower than in 1962, in contrast to Britain where we simply continue to pay ourselves as a nation more than we earn. Average earnings were up by 8·3 per cent. last year compared to inflation of only 5·5 per cent. There has to be a new sense of responsibility in pay claims if Britain is to improve her competitive position and if we are to have any chance of significantly increasing the flow of new jobs.

Let us all be clear about at least two things. First, extra spending of the type and degree consistently advocated by the Opposition — borrowed money pumped into the economy — would not go towards output and jobs. It would simply disappear in higher pay and prices. Secondly, pay is one of the main reasons, if not the main reason, why we have such a disastrous unemployment total. Even unemployment based on the lack of industrial capacity reflects excessive pay awards of the past. Of course, people like getting wage increases well above inflation but that has a cost for the whole community. It has a cost in lost jobs.

In successive years the Government have reduced the burden on business, for example, by abolishing the national insurance surcharge, only to see industry placing a greater burden on its own back by allowing unit labour costs to soar because of excessive pay awards. Excessive pay awards mean that our goods cost more to make. Therefore, the goods cost more to buy, fewer are bought and fewer are then made. That results in higher unemployment.

Pay awards constantly that are ahead of inflation in the private sector also lead to pressures for greater public spending and greater taxation. Teachers, for example, are not complaining that their salaries have not kept pace with inflation; they know that they have. The teachers' complaint is that their pay has fallen behind the private sector and, understandably, they want to catch up. That inevitably means pressure for more public spending and thus more revenue from taxation, fuelled by the private sector failing to face up to the reality of the wage settlements in this country. I have a nightmare that some managers prefer having an overpaid workforce, as long as its numbers are kept to the minimum. They do not want to create new jobs if they can manage it. But we need more new jobs, and that means wage moderation now, and leadership from management and employers.

To that end, I am sure that the whole House will welcome the new proposals for profit sharing, the idea that part of the pay packet should be related to profit and performance. The suggestion that a significant slice could be taken off the tax burden of those who enter profit-sharing schemes is good news, and, further, can lead only to greater employee involvement, which is also good news. However, the stark reality is that employers and managers have to get a grip on spiralling wage costs if we are to get more people into jobs.

If we are to compete in the 21st century, industry has to invest more in research and development. Let us consider a few stark facts concerning just one key area — information technology. IBM's European data processing revenue of almost $10 billion equals the combined turnover of its 10 closest competitors, which illustrates the dominant position of the United States in advanced technologies. It is not surprising that Europe is estimated to import 80 per cent. of the personal computers that it requires, mainly from the United States. As for silicon chips, Europe's market share for the supply of

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

advanced metal oxide semiconductors, which will dominate chip-making for the next few years, is just 6 per cent.

If we are to keep in the forefront of the new technologies that will dominate the 21st century, British companies must invest more of their profits in research and development, because if we do not invest in the future, we shall simply find ourselves struggling ever harder to preserve the industries of the past. Certainly, the British Government and the European Community are acting to stimulate industry to increase research and development. There is the Esprit programme, which concentrates on improving information technology, the BRITE programme, the RACE programme for broad band communication, and the Eureka programme to promote awareness of the practical opportunities that research might bring. If one wants to see the success of investing in research and development and of greater industrial collaboration in Europe, one has simply to look at Airbus and our aviation industry. Airbus, now successfully competing with Boeing, is winning orders and creating jobs. But British companies have to invest more in research and development, and they have to spend more on training.

A recent report called "Challenge to Complacency", commissioned by the Manpower Services Commission as a follow-up to the National Economic Development Office report entitled "Competence and Competition", condemned employers for their indifference to training. The report found that the vast majority of companies studied were not very interested in training and

"had an attitude which bordered on complacency."

Indeed, few chief executives interviewed appeared to have much knowledge of the training activities undertaken by their firms. Compared with the United States, Germany and Japan, Britain's record of the training of adults is lousy, with training being seen not as an investment but, all too often, as an overhead to be reduced when times are difficult.

If we are to succeed, we have to become a nation of lifetime learners. The tools and the technology that are used can be same the world over. What makes the difference is what one does with that technology, and that means the skills and knowledge of those who are using the technology. That means industry having to invest more in training and in people. During the next five years the impact of new technology will involve something between half and three quarters of the nation's entire work force needing to update their skills just to keep pace with new technology.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor's Budget is imaginative and creative. It promotes wider share ownership; it stimulates greater growth; and it builds on the continuing improvements in our economy. But if Britain is to maximise opportunities presented by the Budget and falling oil prices, employers will have to realise that they have responsibilities to ensure common sense on wages, to invest in research and development, and to invest more in training.

8.24 pm

Mr. Reg Freeson (Brent, East): I should like to make an observation on the remarks of the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry). If one wants the economic and social ethos to which he referred, national standards will have to be set. If one wants national standards to be set, it is the Government who should be in the lead on that. One will not get a willingness to undertake increased research and training, which the hon. Gentleman rightly emphasised, if at the same time the Government are cutting in those very areas in our educational establishments. That is perfectly true, and the hon. Gentleman should look at his figures.

Those who take pride in the financial strategy of the Budget, such as the Chancellor, and those who have applauded it, with a few exceptions, on Conservative Benches, are, in effect, applauding and taking pride in continued decay and mass homelessness in our inner cities, the physical decay and decline of our schools, as well as the services that are provided in many of them, and the continued decline of the less often mentioned areas of rural deprivation, which are often cheek by jowl with affluent "exurbs", as the Americans call them. Any pride in such a financial strategy means pride and applause for the things that I have mentioned and many others, too. One cannot have continued restrictions on public expenditure and investment and at the same time put one's hand on one's heart and complain about the crumbling of the inner cities, homelessness, decay in the state of our homes, particularly houses that elderly people live in, and decay in the schools, in our public services, our environment, and so on. The Government are reaching the stage where they are presiding over environmental slums in vast areas of our cities.

I shall concentrate on one or two of the things that I believe could have been dealt with in the Budget rather than comment too much, except indirectly, on what is in the Budget. Potentially, the main generator of economic revival would be what we loosely call the construction industry. In fact, it is a group of industries and services. Many reports have been emanating from that industry and others — the Confederation of British Industry, the Building Employers Confederation, the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors, National Council of Building Material Producers, the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Duke of Edinburgh's study into housing conditions, the House-Builders Federation and the Housing Corporation. All the reports and studies have been pigeon-holed by the Chancellor and the Treasury. Not a thing has been done in the Budget to tackle any of the problems that have been identified in detail—not in general rhetoric—in those reports. Not a single thing is to be found in the Budget that tackles any of the over-urgent problems depicted and detailed in those reports. This is not the first time. We have had several years of that.

Therefore, our housing, schools, colleges, hospitals, roads, sewers, inner cities and deprived rural areas will continue to decline, decay and crumble. When that grows into rioting and other foul conditions in our cities, all the fine speeches and expressions of concern will mean nothing if nothing effective is done about that. Millions of people who are unemployed could be tackling some of those problems. They remain unemployed while huge fortunes are being made in the wasteful buying and selling of existing assets, when we could and should be conserving and creating assets. The strategy should be to create assets. We should invest in that, not in buying and selling.

Those are the issues which could have been dealt with, in part, by the Budget, and which I want to develop. Investment in infrastructure and capital works in public services could be increased without the risk of higher inflation. I agree with the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) that it could be done. Indeed, there could have been increased public sector borrowing without affecting inflation. That is shown analytically and conclusively in the full submissions by the sections of the industry to which I have referred, and by other bodies.

The Chancellor's response last week was that the appropriate policy was to keep borrowing low. I understood him to mean that he was talking about the private as well as the public sector. He did not refer specifically to the public sector borrowing requirement. Although it has not been stated, I have suspected for a long time that Government policy was directed to confining and restraining borrowing across the economy, irrespective of the public or private characteristics of the borrowing, but that they always concentrated on public sector borrowing. There is nothing new about that. It has been going on for years.

Ways could be found to increase investment in rented housing, the inner cities and infrastructure. It means more public sector borrowing. After all, we are borrowing for massively high unemployment. That is where the biggest burden lies. The burden is roughly equivalent to the revenues in the last five or six years from the North sea, which amount to thousands of millions of pounds annually. It would be far better to have a strategy directed to using that resource for the creation of assets rather than unemployment. I echo what the right hon. Member for Henley said on that score.

I shall put briefly to the Chancellor some proposals which could and should be adopted by the Government now without conflicting with what I believe to be their wrongful prejudice against increased public expenditure in such areas. Time forbids me from developing the proposals in detail. With his colleagues in other Departments, in particular the Department of the Environment, will the Chancellor take action to put a stop to the underspending on derelict land and development grants? Underspending occurs mainly because of the bureaucratic procedures employed by the Department of the Environment in processing the grants. Hundreds of millions of pounds are involved in the underspend. Each thousand pounds spent on one of those grants produces £6,000 or £7,000 of private investment.

Housing associations have experienced massive cuts in expenditure in recent years, as have local authorities. The housing associations have made detailed, not general, proposals to the Government to marry the grant expenditure, however limited, with private investment. They have worked out schemes in negotiation with building societies to couple the two organisations. There is one obstacle to that partnership approach — the Treasury. The Chancellor and the Treasury are forbidding housing associations to line up private capital with housing association grants which could double the effects of grant expenditure on rented housing. Instead of 15,000 homes a year, 30,000 could be started. I urge the Chancellor to take action.

8.34 pm

Mr. Richard Ryder (Mid-Norfolk): The right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson) bemoans the Government's low public expenditure. It comes as some surprise since he was happy enough to remain in a Labour Government between 1976, when the Government were forced to go to the International Monetary Fund, and 1979, when they were defeated at the polls. Public expenditure in real terms on the Health Service fell by 30 per cent. in that time, as it did on major road construction.

During the Budget debate Opposition Members such as the right hon. Member for Brent, South urge the Government to spend a great deal more money and to expand the public sector borrowing requirement. They have tried to depict the Government's prudent fiscal policy as a dogmatic experiment which no other sensible nation dares to follow.

In such circumstances it is reasonable to look abroad to discover whether Britain is, as the Opposition contend, the odd man out, or whether the truth is that other countries are pursuing identical fiscal policies to those of the Conservative Government in Britain. Needless to say, Governments of the centre Right in Japan and Germany are pursuing precisely the same policies as Her Majesty's Government.

What about democratic Governments led by the Left, particularly in Europe? What policies are they pursuing? Under President Mitterrand in France the Socialist Government introduced their budget in September last year. It was the toughest budget introduced by any French Government since the war. It involved huge public expenditure cuts across the board, but included—I must tell the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) — an increase in law and order expenditure. Defence expenditure was also increased by 2 per cent. President Mitterrand cut public expenditure on trade and industry. Public expenditure on the car industry was sliced through Renault. Expenditure on the steel-making industry through Usinov was sliced by a Socialist Government. Expenditure on social security was cut too. A person under the age of 25 in France, who has been unemployed for longer than six months, can be deprived of unemployment benefit. Psychiatric treatment in the French health service has been farmed out to the private sector. All that has happened under a Socialist Government.

What about Socialist Spain? The Socialist Government in Spain last year introduced the toughest ever budget since General Franco's time. That Government have sliced 20 per cent. from capital spending on infrastructure and nationalised industries. The Socialist Government in Spain have cut pensions. A new pensions reform law came into operation last August, and lower pensions will now be paid.

The same applies to Italy where the Socialist Prime Minister, Mr. Craxi, presented an austerity budget to the Italian Parliament last September. Health spending was to be curbed by raising prescription and other charges by at least 19 per cent., and by as much as 25 per cent. Italy imposed hefty cuts in welfare benefits and families with only one child are no longer to receive benefit. Concessionary rates for travel on railways and for electricity are to be cut. University fees, about which we hear so much, are to be raised significantly by that Socialist Government.

I have been talking about budgetary policies by Socialist Governments who have to grapple daily with the

[Mr. Richard Ryder]

realities of office, rather than dallying in the sort of rhetoric of opposition that we have heard from the Labour party and the alliance in the last few days.

I have a little piece of good news for the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East. I have a small consolation for him. There is a Socialist Government in the democratic world which has pursued almost the same policies as he recommends we follow here. That Socialist Government is the Government of Australia.

The Australian Government have increased public expenditure and there have been six major consequences. During the past year the Australians have had to devalue their currency by 20 per cent. Interest rates in Australia under a Labour Government have hit 20 per cent. and small businessmen have been driven into bankruptcy. The inflation rate in Australia is double the OECD average and there is rising international debt in Australia. The Australian balance of payment problems are a cause for enormous concern. Lastly, industrial disputes are increasing rapidly in Australia.

All these problems are being encountered by a Labour Government in Australia who are putting forward, and have implemented, precisely the same policies that the British Labour party is suggesting should be followed in Britain, and which a Labour Government would introduce.

If Britain wants to embrace extravagant policies of the Left, it has only to look at what has happened in Australia. That which has happened in Australia would happen here if a Labour Government were elected. We should have double-digit inflation, and interest and mortgage rates of 20 per cent. We would have industrial strife on the scale of the 1960s and 1970s. We would have rising international debt, balance of payments problems and currency devaluation. It is because I do not wish these kind of Labour policies to be pursued in Britain or to witness their consequences if the Labour party is given the chance to form a Government that I shall be supporting my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the House divides. I congratulate him wholeheartedly on introducing an excellent Budget.

8.42 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): There was a joker missing from the Budget statement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and that was exchange rate policy. The Government started out in 1979 with the view that markets could be trusted to manage exchange rates better than Governments could. They considered that Governments had no real power in the face of market forces and today's capital flows. The Chancellor of the Exchequer seems now to have abandoned these extreme views. He has recognised that the exchange rate is an important indicator and he took part in the Group of Five meeting in September 1985 when the main industrial countries agreed to take concerted action to move interest rates and exchange rates. Indeed they have moved in the directions needed to correct imbalances in cost competitiveness and trade that have done more damage to Britain than any other country.

The movement that has taken place seems to have exhausted the extent of the agreement. The United States might like the dollar to be lower, but Japan seems to think that the yen has risen enough. So where do we go from here? What is our national interest with the pound? What understanding should we seek from other industrial countries?

The Chancellor of the Exchequer is slowly learning the lessons that are set out in the second special report in 1983 of the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service that was produced at the end of the previous Parliament. The right hon. Gentleman is following very much the course that we recommended to him. Mechanistically he repeats the formula that is now a regular feature of financial statements. It is as follows:

"There is no mechanical formula for taking the exchange rate into account in assessing monetary conditions".

Last year the phrase was:

"There is no mechanistic formula".

But this year he goes on to give the exchange rate an independent role. He states:

"a balance must be struck between the exchange rate and domestic monetary growth consistent with the Government's aims for money GDP and inflation."

The "balance" of objectives which the Chancellor of the Exchequer talks about he may not like to describe as a mechanism, but there is a computer programme operating in the Treasury which comes remarkably close to doing what the right hon. Gentleman describes. The Government have a number of policy instruments, including fiscal policy, which they adjust annually in the Budget. Interest rates and intervention in the money and foreign exchange markets are instruments which they can adjust more frequently and even continuously. The effects on unemployment, growth, the balance of payments and inflation are not measurable continuously, and even shorter-term monthly measures are often not a reliable indicator of trends. The effects on the exchange rate and capital flows are, however, observable continuously, and are very important.

There is, therefore, a slowly moving background of final objectives and fiscal policy, and a rapidly moving foreground of market expectations, intervention, interest rate adjustments, and their effects on the exchange rate and capital flows. The shorter-term foreground and the longer-term background are part of the same scene. They interact and they have to be mutually consistent.

To set the background, it is necessary to attach priorities to the final objectives of growth, employment and stable prices. It is not a question whether unemployment matters. Of course it matters, even to the Chancellor. But the Chancellor is prepared, perhaps, to give less priority to the speed of reducing unemployment than the Opposition would. Any Chancellor will set the instruments at his disposal to achieve the best achievable balance of objectives given his priorities. That is broadly the content of the Budget speech and the Financial Statement and Budget Report, which includes forecasts of the expected outturn. It enables the House to judge the Government's priorities, and it also sets the expectations of the markets.

But one thing is for sure: events will not fulfil those expectations, especially for the most variable short-term indicators, such as the exchange rate and financial markets, which in the absence of any definite expectations can go all over the place.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer does not even spell our precisely his expectations for the exchange rate, which is said to be assumed to remain at broadly its present level. That may or may not be right. But what is done internally within the Treasury? The computer programme that I

mentioned is operated by the Treasury. It indicates fiscal policy instrument levels that are appropriate to the balance of priorities or final objectives. But it also picks short-term rules which indicate the adjustment of, for example, interest rate changes which will be needed in response to movements of the exchange rate from its expected path. None of this leads automatically to policy adjustments. It is not in that sense a mechanism. But it does give guidance which, on the best evidence available, achieves a balance between objectives, and a coherence of shorter-term actions on interest rates and longer-term actions on fiscal policies.

This apparatus does use our old friend the Treasury model. It can handle various types of expectation formation and uncertainty, and select a policy which produces a reasonable result on models based on conflicting economic theories. Very much the same sort of action now emerges from the Treasury, London Business School and National Institute models, now that they are being more rigorously tested and compared. We have, therefore, a basis for a more pragmatic fiscal and monetary policy which properly reflects the Government's priorities at the national level.

But what about the international level? Can we trace the international repercussions and reactions? A fortnight ago, at a conference of the Brookings Institution in Washington, the first comparisons took place between the internationally linked model systems maintained by the Federal Reserve Board, the OECD, the Japan Economic Planning Agency, and nine other systems. The Treasury, the Bank of England and the IMF were all well represented so the Chancellor has his own reports of what took place. There were, of course, substantial differences, particularly among the outliers. But what impressed me was that in the models that mattered there was broad agreement on the sign and on the timing of effects of fiscal and monetary changes in the United States on the rest of the OECD, and conversely. It looked as if the apparatus was there to provide the analytical framework needed for international negotiation and co-operation in our mutual interests.

In the Treasury programme that I described, the level and weight of the exchange rate target has to be set externally. So, notionally, these are adjustable in international negotiation. If the exercise that the Treasury does is done on one of these international model systems, each country can be left to specify its own priorities, and the system will produce a set of exchange rate rules which would maximise the sum of benefits to all countries, or, perhaps more appropriately, maximise the minimum benefit to any one country. That does not, of course, dictate the outcome of negotiations but it gives it a sound analytical basis and, therefore, a better chance of success.

If the evidence of the conference is anything to go by, Britain now enjoys a comparative advantage in such work. It would be in the British interest if the Chancellor were to say rather more about his exchange rate policy and spell out the evidence on which it is based. Most importantly, it can encompass the hazards that remain on the oil price. I would not expect that to lead to our joining the EMS, but I would expect it to stimulate work by other Governments and the international organisations leading to developments in the EMS, in the context of wider international co-operation, in which we could join with the hope and expectation that we could avoid exchange rate wars and the gross misalignments of currencies which have done so much damage in recent years.

8.49 pm

Mr. William Powell (Corby): The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), who unfortunately is not in the Chamber, is much admired in the House for his consistency and sincerity. However, when he chose to argue that Labour Governments have only gone wrong in the past because they abandoned Socialism and that if only they had pursued red-blooded Socialism they would not have gone wrong, I could not help but reflect that the Labour Government were not pursuing Conservative policy when they were driven to the IMF. Frankly, over the course of the past four days of this debate the Opposition have presented us with a picture revealing a remarkable reluctance to come to terms with those aspects of previous Labour rule which led them invariably to shipwreck and which are being pursued and continued today, as my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder) said, by a Labour Government on the other side of the world.

It is very easy to mouth platitudes, to be in favour of everything progressive and to say that if only one was given the opportunity of putting such things into action then everything would be right. People who say that fail to come to terms with the fact that such a policy, when tried in the past, invariably led to failure.

The simple truth is that previous Labour Governments went wrong not because they failed to pursue red-blooded Socialism, but because Socialism is the locomotive of inflation—the locomotive which destroys jobs and leads to the social breakdown which has caused so much comment during this debate.

It is impossible, after more than 80 speeches during the course of the debate, for one of the last Conservative Back Bench speakers to contribute anything novel to the debate. It would not be worth while my trying to do that. Instead, I should like to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on a number of points. I congratulate him and the Governor of the Bank of England on the way that they have handled the currency instability which occurred in January and February of this year. At the same time last year, when we had a period of currency instability, not everyone was universally happy with the way in which it was handled. However, there cannot be the slightest doubt that the way it was handled this year has been dramatically successful. Heads have been kept, and, at the very time when everyone was forecasting that things would go off course, that did not happen. Considerable praise is due to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and to the Governor of the Bank of England for handling things extremely well this year.

I also congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on continuing the policy adopted in previous years and on maintaining course. Many people think that each Budget should be a new beginning each year. Many wish to blot out previous years and think that it is possible to have a new beginning each year. Of course, this year's Budget is merely a development of a policy that has been carried on —thank goodness—for some years. I have no doubt that the measures taken last year will continue to have a beneficial effect upon economic activity during the course of next year and that the recent and new measures will take some time before they have their full impact on the economy. A Budget is not and cannot be a new beginning.

[Mr. William Powell]

It is part of the progression of policy. My right hon. Friend deserves all praise for seeing it in that context and not in the way in which so many would have him view it.

I should also like to take this opportunity, perhaps belatedly, to congratulate my right hon. Friend on the elimination—I have forgotten just how long ago it was done—of the halfpenny from our currency. That had one very good effect during the course of the debate. The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon), representing the Liberal party, was not able to come to the House as he would have done in previous years and advocate not a penny reduction in the standard rate of income tax, but only half—a halfpenny reduction. The elimiation of the halfpenny from our currency has at least had the effect of forcing Liberals to stop trying to halve what everybody else is trying to do and saying that that was the correct judgment to make.

Many of the aspects of the Budget are to be welcomed. I welcome the schemes which will encourage saving. I have no doubt that other schemes will come forward in subsequent years.

I very much welcome the abolition of the lifetime gifts tax, and I commend to the House the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) who analysed that point clearly in his speech. It has been made very clear that the Liberal party is against the handing on of small businesses through families. They are in favour of small businesses, provided that they are not successful or grow to the point at which they come within tax limits. That humbug, which the hon. Member for Truro articulated, is clearly on the record. I know that in every constituency, including his own, people will realise the nonsense that he was speaking. We can understand the Labour party being completely against family businesses and all that that involves—its opposition to that is honest and straightforward — but the humbug and nonsense from the Liberal party has been clearly revealed for what it is.

A Budget offers the opportunity for developing existing policies. It should never be seen as a new beginning, as so many commentators inside and outside the House choose to see it. I hope that the Budget policy will continue to develop. However, I recognise that we are not as successful as we ought to be in certain matters.

As a country we are deficient in two major areas. First, as a general rule, English people—I choose that phrase carefully—hate selling. There are plenty of exceptions to that general rule. Many successful companies have prospered on that basis, but it is the general rule. We love people to buy from us but we hate the idea of going out and getting a sale. We shall not be successful as an economy until all companies, not just the best companies, recognise that they must go out into the market place and sell their products. That is not something that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will be able to make clear in his Budgets, but it shows that budgetary policy is only one aspect of the development of the economy. Much has to be done outside.

My second point is that Britain's training provision is desperately inadequate. I hope that companies will recognise much of what has been said during the debate and will use their new-found profits to invest much more heavily in research, development and training. Thank heaven, they are much more profitable than they were when the Labour party was in power.

Alas, it is not possible for me to develop my arguments. Without going into the judgments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley on the fiscal adjustment, the PSBR, and so on, I strongly commend his basic line of approach. I commend the Budget to the House.

8.59 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): I want to make three short points. First, I hope that when my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) commends, as I am sure he will in his many speeches in the country, the lower cost of borrowing, he will explain to the country how that is consistent with his rather heroic attitude towards public expenditure generally. Those of us who admire and watch what he says will look forward to a further explanation on that point.

Secondly, I regret that in this Budget my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has effectively abandoned the principle of fiscal neutrality. He has suffered some important defeats in pursuit of that policy. He was defeated over cars and pensions and he has been defeated over mortgage interest relief. He won an important battle upon investment allowances and he has now, at least for the time being, given up the battle. Many Conservative Members applaud that retreat and speak with great approval of the various incentives that he has given to politically favoured interest groups. He has been skilful in his selection of those which he intends should benefit. But my right hon. Friend has persuaded me of the advantages of fiscal neutrality, and I hope that the time will come when the Tory party returns to that principle, although I accept that by returning to it we shall offend many of the interest groups that so often support us.

Thirdly, and finally, I wish to agree with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) in his criticisms of the observations in the Red Book about monetary policy. But I come to an entirely different conclusion from my right hon. and learned Friend. My right hon. and learned Friend wishes us to go into the EMS. I agree that there is a need for a discipline, but I would assert that disciplines in Britain are better if they are recognised to be internal disciplines—that we recognise that we are doing something not because we are ordered to do it by the IMF, or even the EMS, but because we recognise the social advantages of sound money.

I am somewhat amazed that many of those who wish us to go into the EMS are fierce supporters of our continued membership of the EEC. I am somewhat sceptical of that, but I conclude by saying that those who want us to go into the EMS may be doing the cause of Europe severe harm, because when the time comes to take deflationary action upon the economy if we go into the EMS, we can be certain that it will not be the Government of the day who are blamed, but the EMS and the other nations of Europe. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will continue her opposition to our going into the EMS.

9.3 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): After the speech of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), the Chancellor may be surprised to know that I intend to begin my speech with a compliment

to him. I always believe that credit should be given where it is due and for once I agree with the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark), who described the Chancellor's Budget as clever and ingenious. I think that the words were originally used by other hon. Members—the right hon. Members for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) and for Worthing (Mr. Higgins)—but I agree that the Budget is clever, skilful and ingenious. As the Chancellor admitted at the beginning of his Budget statement, the fall in the price of oil and the resulting fall in the Government's income from the special taxes on oil revenues mean that the Chancellor is left with little room for manoeuvre within the framework of his principles and prejudices.

I admire the way in which the Chancellor presented the Budget under these circumstances, but I must make it clear that it is admiration of a sort that I give to the cleverness, skill and ingenuity of the professional cardsharp. The only difference was that the Budget deceived the ear rather than the eye, and already the commentators are beginning to realise the truth.

Let us consider, for example, what the Chancellor said about the fall in oil prices and the effect of that fall on the Government and on the economy. As I have already said, the Chancellor made, for him, a remarkable admission. He admitted that his room for manoeuvre was restricted by the fall in oil prices. However, later in his speech, as part of his constant attempt to disguise the dependence of the Government and the economy on North sea oil, he pointed out, quite fairly—I do not argue with the figures—that North sea oil accounts for only 5 per cent. of gross domestic product. The other sectors of the economy—manufacturing industry, agriculture, distribution, construction, public and private services—account for 95 per cent. of economic activity.

The mere statement of these figures constitutes a condemnation of the Government's strategy because the Chancellor is saying that his Budget, his ability to cut taxes or to increase public expenditure, his success and the Government's survival, depend not on the 95 per cent. of economic activity in Britain but the 5 per cent. of economic activity in and around the North sea. The truth is that the vital decisions at the heart of the Government's economic policy are taken not by the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, but by Sheikh Yamani and his colleagues in OPEC. They are taken without any reference to this country or the balance of our economic interests. It is surely ironic that, more than any other part of Western Europe, this country is at the mercy of the middle east. The correct description of any country whose Government's economic policies are determined by other Governments is to call it a colony. That is the role of Britain today. Our colonial past has become our colonial present with the roles reversed.

The price of oil is determined elsewhere and the Chancellor's Budget is entirely dependent on it. Dependent on it? The Government's policies are dominated by it. During the next few months, if the price of oil falls to $10 a barrel, the Chancellor tells us that the result for the Government will be disaster. If the price of oil rises to $20 we shall have a tax-cutting Budget on a massive scale next year—in the run-up to the general election. Of course, the tax cuts will be, and can only be, temporary, because the oil will eventually run out. What will happen then? The Chancellor gave his answer on Tuesday with characteristic sleight of hand:

> "If we can survive unscathed the loss of half of our North sea oil revenues in less than 25 weeks, the prospective loss of the other half over the remainder of the next 25 years should not cause us undue concern."—[*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 168.]

The Chancellor forgets that there is a tremendous difference between loss of revenue due to the fall in the price of oil and the inevitable loss of revenue when the oil runs out. The Chancellor himself pointed out that, although lower prices for oil result in lower revenue for the Government, it also means lower costs to British industry. British industry benefits not only in terms of lower inflation but in terms of jobs. It also benefits, we hope, from the boost in world trade arising from universally lower prices for oil.

What will happen when the oil runs out and we lose the rest of the revenue? That will not have beneficial side effects for British industry. There will not be any reduction in costs because industry will still be paying the international price for oil. There will be no benefits in terms of lower costs, lower inflation and extra jobs.

Every economist knows — I am sure that the Chancellor must know — that his comparison of the effect of lower oil prices and the exhaustion of North sea oil was ingenious but invalid. I envisage a standard question in examinations on economics asking "Comment on the following statement—" after which will follow that classic quotation from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who will then be a former Chancellor of the Exchequer. Anybody how goes along with him will fail the exam as surely as the Chancellor is failing the country.

We also have the Chancellor's equally skilful, but equally misleading, approach to indirect taxes. Anybody who listened to the Chancellor's statement would have thought that he was putting all of the increases on cigarettes and petrol and leaving all other indirect taxes at the same level. He referred to the vehicle excise duty for cars, vans, and lorries but he forgot to tell us — he refrained from telling us—that only those rates, not all rates of vehicle excise duty, were unchanged.

We had to wait for a press release from the Department of Transport to learn that the Chancellor was increasing the vehicle excise duty on all forms of public transport. Even the Department of Transport took care to tell the editors of newspapers that it was the Chancellor's decision, not its decision, although he had left it to the Department of Transport to make the announcement.

There is no logic about the decision. Those of us who served on the Standing Committee which examined last year's Finance Bill remember that there was no logic or economic justification for the existing pattern of vehicle excise duties. The Government even brought the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport to the Committee in an attempt to explain the Government's thinking to us. From what I heard afterwards, Labour members of the Committee were not alone in concluding that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State made a bad job of explaining the Government's thinking because the Government had not done any thinking about vehicle excise duty. It is clear from this year's Budget statement that the Chancellor has not given any thought to the level or pattern of vehicle excise duties during the past 12 months either. So much for his claim of wanting to be known as a reforming Chancellor.

The Chancellor's attitude to petrol tax is even more revealing. As he said, petrol prices have drifted down

[Mr. Terry Davis]

recently as a result of falling oil prices, but the price of petrol has not dropped as much as it should. By the Chancellor's own admission, the price of petrol should have been 12p a gallon lower than it was on Budget day. What was the Chancellor's response? Did he see his role as the protector of consumers? Did he put any pressure on oil companies to pass on the reduction to the motorist? Did he announce that, although the price of petrol was due to drop by another 12p, he would regretfully have to increase the price by 5·5p to protect the Government's revenue against inflation? The answer is no on all counts. Instead, the Chancellor proposed what was effectively a deal with the oil companies. He said that the oil companies could keep 4·5p of that 12p if only they would let him have the rest—the 7·5p—without putting up the price at the pump, as he put it. He hoped that nobody would notice and that at least the motorist would not mind. It was a typical piece of ingenuity. The price of petrol should have come down, and it should still come down after allowing for the Chancellor's 7·5p, but the Chancellor was offering to keep quiet about it if only the oil companies would deal him in. The Chancellor's attitude to the oil companies is like the attitude of a policemen running a protection racket—offering to keep quiet if he gets his cut.

We also have the ingenuity of the Chancellor's policies to encourage share ownership, especially the personal equity plan. As my hon. friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) explained to the House, if the Chancellor was really trying to encourage new investors, he would restrict the tax benefits of the new scheme to that group. The truth is that the personal equity plan is a device to enable existing investors to avoid the tax on existing investment by switching their funds from their existing portfolios to the personal equity plan. The Chancellor shakes his head. If I am wrong, I am sure that he will explain later, and we shall look carefully at the Finance Bill for that provision. If people are able to switch their funds in that way, they will benefit disproportionately more than the new investor, by obtaining relief on dividends at the highest rates of tax as well as relief from capital gains tax.

This is the Chancellor who claims to want to help the small saver and the small investor. He even referred to his scheme as being designed specifically to encourage the smaller savers. Yet this is the same Chancellor who introduced a new tax on the savings of the smallest savers, the Chancellor whose 1984 Budget imposed tax on the interest received by people whose income was, and is, so low that they would not otherwise pay any income tax. These are the people who typically put their savings in the trustee savings bank or similar institutions and find that when they receive interest on their savings the Chancellor has been there before them and taken his cut of 25 per cent. with all the skill of a pickpocket.

That is not all. There is the same inconsistency in the Chancellor's treatment of other savers—people with incomes above average, who are liable to income tax on their investment incomes. This is the Chancellor who, only two years ago, as the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West has just reminded us, turned the phrase "fiscal neutrality" into a cliché. This is the Chancellor who said that there should not be any difference in treatment of the income that investors and savers receive from different sources. He said that the institutions should compete on equal tax terms. That was the intellectual justification for the composite rate of tax on the interest paid by the trustee savings bank and similar institutions.

What price fiscal neutrality now? Where is the fiscal neutrality in charging tax on all interest received by savers and relieving income tax on dividends received by the same people if they put money into a personal equity plan rather than a trustee savings bank? No doubt the Chancellor will tell us later.

The one genuine tax concession for the individual taxpayer is the 1p off income tax. The arguments for and against this concession have all been rehearsed during our debates, and we all agree that it illustrates the differences between us. The Conservative party gives, and has always given, the greatest priority to tax cuts, by which it means cuts in the taxes on wealth and income, whereas the Labour party gives greater priority to an increase in public expenditure in order to extend and improve social services in the widest sense, to alleviate poverty in all its forms and above all to create jobs and reduce unemployment.

A Labour Government with £1 billion to spare would have used it differently. For example, to reduce the amount of income tax paid by people on low income, we would have preferred to raise the threshold for the basic rate of tax. To reduce the amount taken from people with the lowest wages, we would have preferred to raise the threshold for national insurance contributions. To have given the greatest help to people in greatest poverty, we would have preferred to increase pensions and child benefit.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) explained last week, such measures would cost much more than £1 billion. We calculate that it would cost £3 billion to increase pensions and child benefit and extend the long-term rate for supplementary benefit to the long-term unemployed. We would get that money, not at the expense of the man and woman paying the standard rate of income tax, but by increasing the taxes paid by the richest 5 per cent. of society.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Will the hon. Gentleman be voting against the cut in income tax?

Mr. Davis: I saw the hon. Gentleman receive that message from the Chancellor of the Exchequer a few moments ago via the Chancellor's PPS. We all know where the question came from, but I shall answer the Chancellor's question. We shall not be voting against the reduction in the standard rate of income tax. It would be strange if the Labour party voted against a reduction of 1p on the way towards a standard rate of income tax that existed when we left office. It was 25p, and is now 30p, so why should we vote against a slip back towards 25p? Anyway, we have made it clear that a cut in the standard rate of income tax will be of some benefit to those on the lowest wages who pay income tax. We do not deny that. It will provide a small amount. We are not going to set off the basic rate taxpayer against pensioners, parents and the long-term unemployed. We will get that money from the Chancellor's friends, the richest 5 per cent. of our society, those who have gained £3 billion a year. This Government have given that money to the rich not just in this Budget, but in all of their Budgets. That money has been given away in cuts not in the standard rate of income tax, but in the higher rates of income tax. It has been given away in

the abolition of the investment income surcharge and in cuts in capital gains tax. It has also been given away in cuts in capital transfer tax and now in the abolition of that tax. I have mentioned only the four biggest giveaways. That money has been given not to those on the lowest incomes who are in greatest need, but to those on the highest incomes with the least need.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): Is the top rate of our income tax in line with the income tax rates paid in the EEC?

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman has not been listening. I specifically referred not just to the higher rates of income tax but to the capital taxes. Those taxes have been cut and now abolished by this Government. That is the answer to Tory spokesmen such as the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who has just drawn himself to my attention. The right hon. Gentleman claimed that the Labour party's programme would be financed only by increasing the standard rate of income tax or by increasing VAT. But I shall not take any lessons from the chairman of a party that nearly doubled VAT within six weeks of coming to office.

I think that the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) today made his first speech since returning to the House. On a personal level, we are all glad that he has returned. There is no Conservative Member who feels more strongly than my hon. Friends and I feel about the reasons for his temporary absence.

Mr. Tebbit: May I assume that Opposition Members will be voting in favour of the prevention of terrorism legislation next time?

Mr. Davis: I must also tell the right hon. Member for Chingford that on a political level his absence has not led us to regard him more fondly.

But our real quarrel with Conservative spokesmen is that they constantly refuse to acknowledge that the most valuable, expensive and far-reaching tax concessions introduced by the Conservative Government have been reductions in the tax paid by people with large amounts of capital and people with substantial incomes derived from that capital. Those are the people who have benefited most from the Government's tax cuts, and it is they who will pay more to finance the Labour Government's anti-poverty programme. That programme will involve at present an increase of £3 a week in child benefit for every child; an increase of £5 a week in real terms in the pension for a single person; an increase of £8 a week in the pension for a married couple; and the extension of the long-term rate of supplementary benefit to the long-term unemployed.

The biggest failure of this Government is their failure to reduce unemployment and all the Chancellor's cleverness and skill and ingenuity cannot hide that failure from the British people. Of course we welcome an extra £100 million for job creation schemes, but such a sum is totally inadequate when compared to what is needed. That is why my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook announced a package of measures with the aim of providing a million new jobs within two years.

I come to the question put to me by the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) who quoted directly from *Hansard* of 19 March 1986. He quoted the question put by the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) at column 309. It is a pity that the hon. Member for Eastbourne did not listen carefully to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook, or at least did not read on in *Hansard*. If he had read on to the next column he would have seen the answer to the question. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Eastbourne was absent from our proceedings when the question was answered, but he could have read it before he made his intervention.

That package announced by my right hon. Friend will add up to £6·8 billion, not the £24 billion proclaimed by the Chief Secretary.

This debate has been overshadowed by the Chief Secretary's claim to have costed the Labour programme at £24 billion, a claim echoed by the right hon. Member for Chingford. That total has been shown to be a fiction. It was calculated by civil servants acting as animated calculating machines and dutifully totting up the cost for a mixture of plans for immediate implementation, long-term commitments and Green Paper type proposals on which the Labour party is consulting.

It is quite clear from the records that the Chief Secretary had the nerve to send to us that it was a mixture collected, confused and even invented by the Chief Secretary. Worse still, even where the Chief Secretary is right in his claims and his costings, he fails to understand — and many would say that he does not want to understand — that any increase in public expenditure on housing, roads, education, the Health Service or on a community programme or on training for the unemployed, would also have the effect of reducing all those items of public expenditure that result from unemployment.

We have made the point before and I will make it again. The top priority of the next Labour Government will be a reduction in unemployment. That is why we will increase public expenditure. It will be done to reduce unemployment, but the creation of new jobs will not only do that: it will also reduce the cost of unemployment. It costs £6,000 a year for every person who is unemployed, and for every person helped to get back to work the Government will save £6,000. That money is now spent on unemployment, and it will become available for education and the arts and a better standard of living for all those people, from pensioners to students, who depend on the Government for their standard of living. That is not an increase in public expenditure: it is a redistribution of public expenditure and resources.

I do not expect the Chief Secretary to understand that because he does not understand the economy any more than the Chancellor understands industry. Look at them: a financial journalist and a merchant banker supported by an investment banker and another hon. Gentleman who simply calls himself "banker." None of them has ever been unemployed or has ever worked in industry. The only thing that has ever dirtied their hands is their own economic policy. They do not care about industry or unemployment or poverty. That is why they have produced a Budget that is irrelevant to the needs of the country, and that is why the Labour party opposes it.

9.28 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): The one thing of which we are always sure when the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) winds up a debate is entertainment. What he says bears little relationship to the facts, but at least we get the entertainment. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for not

[Mr. Nigel Lawson]

failing us this evening. He began his speech by saying that Britain was at the mercy of the middle east. The one thing that this Budget and the events that surrounded its conception has shown is, first, that events in the oil market have occurred not as a result of political actions by Governments in the middle east, but as a result of market forces asserting themselves against the political wishes of those in the middle east. Secondly, the events surrounding the Budget's conception have shown that our economic performance is in no way dependent on North sea oil. North sea oil is an important but marginal issue.

I should like to turn the point on which the hon. Member for Hodge Hill ended — the £24 billion programme which, as my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary has rightly pointed out, is the sum to which the Labour party's commitments add up. *[Interruption.]* There is no point in the hon. Member for Hodge Hill muttering from a sedentary position that that is not true. During these debates, Labour Members announced not only the £3·6 billion programme for the relief of poverty but, on top of that, a £6·8 billion programme for jobs. We have been told that everything else is merely Green Paper conjecture for consultation. Is that really the case? Is the £1·3 billion, which the Labour party has said it will spend on education in various forms, merely a Green Paper type figure for consultation, or is it serious?

Mr. Terry Davis *rose*——

Mr. Lawson: I shall give way in a moment. Is the £0·8 billion——

Mr. Davis: Will the right hon. Gentleman let me answer?

Mr. Lawson: In a moment. Is the £0·8 billion, which the Labour party has said is the extra amount it will spend on the Health Service, merely a Green Paper type speculation? Is the Labour party now resiling from the £1·1 billion extra which the Leader of the Opposition said would be spent on overseas aid? Is the Labour party now resiling from the extra £1 billion which the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) said was for additional spending on industry? Which of those programmes is a commitment and from which does the Labour party resile?

Mr. Davis: If the Chancellor had sat through more of our debates he would have heard the truth about our promises on the education programme. He knows that the figures were invented by the Chief Secretary. There is a four letter word to describe that, which is not parliamentary language.

Mr. Lawson: On the contrary, the figure that I have cited has been amended as a result of the letter from the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). Will the hon. Member for Hodge Hill say whether the Labour party resiles from the figures on health, education, overseas aid and aid to industry?

Mr. Davis: The Chief Secretary invented pledges, costed them wrongly and refused to retract. Any other hon. Member would have apologised to the House. We now know that the figures really came from the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Chief Secretary was merely his parrot.

Mr. Lawson: It is clear that the hon. Gentleman, speaking on behalf of the Opposition, has not resiled from those figures and that, therefore, the £24 billion still stands.

How will the Labour party pay for all those programmes? For a Chancellor of the Exchequer, when faced with questions of this kind——

Mr. Hoyle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. When will the Chancellor reply to the debate?

Mr. Speaker: The Chancellor has been speaking for about five minutes.

Mr. Lawson: I had no intention of going into these waters until these matters were raised by the hon. Member for Hodge Hill. I have to reply to his remarks.

How will the Labour party pay for all these programmes? When a Chancellor of the Exchequer has to be interrogated, he goes to the Select Committee on Treasury and Civil Service, and he is investigated by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) and other hon. Members. For a shadow spokesman on economic affairs, the equivalent of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee is Jimmy Young. Therefore, it is right that I should look to the transcript of the very important interview that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook gave on the Jimmy Young programme on 20 March. This is very important, and the House ought to pay attention.

Mr. Young said:

"Can I just ask you, I mean would what you get from the rich cover all the things that you want to do?"

The right hon. Gentleman said:

"It would more than cover it. Not the job programme, not the job programme. It would cover the pensions, the child benefit and the help to the long term unemployed. The very rich have got back about £3·64 billion and our anti-poverty programme, increasing the pension and so on, would cost about £3·5 billion."

Mr. Young said:

"Can I just ask you; when you say rich, Roy, you mean who's rich? I mean what income are you talking about?"

The right hon. Gentleman said:

"It's people earning more than £25,000 a year . . . I don't think we should begrudge people their very high earnings, we just ought to face the fact that if you don't tax them properly, there are penalties."

Mr. Young asked:

"Can I just get that one out of the way: when you say tax them properly, what sort of level would they be paying tax then, people on £25,000 a year?"

The right hon. Gentleman replied:

"The general income tax level wouldn't change very much, because our complaint is not about income tax, which ought not to return to what it was 10 years ago—98 per cent. on the marginal pound. I don't want income tax ever to get back to that level for £30,000, £40,000, £50,000."

Mr. Young then asked:

"You wouldn't want it to get past what sort of level?"

The right hon. Gentleman replied:

"I wouldn't want to change income tax very much. What I would want to do is remove some of the other tax perks that they've been given; capital gains tax, capital transfer tax and particularly the tax on unearned income."

Let us look at that. There would be no change in income tax at all, or at least not very much, but changes in capital gains tax and capital transfer tax. Let us see what that adds up to. *[Interruption.]* The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was able to make his speech in relative quiet. I hope that the same courtesy will be extended to me.

The reductions in CGT and CTT under the present Government have added up to £620 million. On top of that, the abolition of the investment income surcharge—

much of which went to people on the standard rate, not just to the wealthy—amounted to £740 million. So the total is £1·36 billion, or, even generously, only £1½ billion. I doubt very much, too, whether the right hon. Gentleman would be able to get that £1½ billion, because, as a result of the changes that we have made and the more benign climate for investment in this country, the yield on capital taxes since we have been in office has risen in real terms by more than 20 per cent. despite those reductions. Nevertheless, with that £1½ billion, the right hon. Gentleman would still be £2 billion short of his £3½ billion. Where would he find it? If he confined himself to those earning over £25,000, he would have to tax every single penny above £25,000 at 75 per cent. compared with the present starting point of 45 per cent. For the right hon. Gentleman to say that he would not change income tax very much is sheer humbug and hypocrisy, and he should know that that is not the case.

Furthermore, during the period that this Government have been in office, as a result of the benign climate that has been created, the share of total income tax paid by the top 5 per cent. has not fallen. It has risen from 24 per cent. of the total in 1978-79 to 27 per cent. of the total in the coming year. So much for the arithmetic of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook.

The speech of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East was one of the poorest speeches that he has made in this House for some considerable time. He claimed that manufacturing output stagnated in 1985. Manufacturing output rose in 1985 by 3 per cent., which was more than in any single year of the last Labour Government.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) made a more substantial speech. I thank him for his support for the Budget. He and the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) expressed opposing views about the desirability of joining the European monetary system. That is clearly an important issue, but I am afraid that I do not have time to go into the details of it tonight. However, I assure the House that we shall continue to keep it under close review.

The right hon. Member for South Down asked about the consequences that I expect to flow from the improvement in industry's success in the markets, both at home and overseas. One answer is more jobs, and I am sure that he will welcome that. However, I suspect that he was referring to the balance of payments. Another answer would be to offset the declining surplus in oil which is likely to occur on the overseas account.

My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) also supported the Budget. He queried to some extent the preference for the basic rate over thresholds. In this Parliament alone we have moved very substantially on tax thresholds. We have increased tax thresholds in real terms by more than 20 per cent. Most of that increase has been during the lifetime of this Parliament. Our thresholds are higher, as a proportion of average earnings, than those in Germany and the United States, whereas the starting point of our basic rate is higher than in almost any other country in the world. It is right that we should seek to bring it down, and I make no apology for saying that the long term aim of this Government is to get it down to 25 per cent.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) spoke, in particular, about inner city deprivation. If there is one culprit responsible for the acute problem of inner city deprivation, it is the public sector and the way in which local authorities have continually harassed businesses. It was necessary to create the urban development corporations, to which my right hon. Friend referred, in order to take power out of the hands of the local authorities in those areas.

On the whole, this Budget has been well received by the financial markets, as a result of which we have seen already a reduction of 1 per cent. in interest rates and a reduction in the mortgage rate. It has also been well received by industry, and not least by charities. I should like to say a word about charities. Some of the most important elements in the Budget were the measures that were introduced to encourage giving to charities and the charities themselves. I refer to the basic concession for corporate giving, the brand new concession for payroll giving by employees, the removal of the ceiling of £10,000 on covenants and the selection of value added tax reliefs. Certain abuses were also stopped. The Institute of Charity Fund-Raising Managers had this to say — *[Interruption.]* I am sorry that Opposition Members have no interest whatever in charitable giving. It is characteristic of them.

Mr. Bell: The reason why the Opposition have taken no interest in the subject until now is that the Chancellor has not alluded to the Budget. He has only now come to the Budget. We shall listen to him with interest.

Mr. Lawson: It is clear that the hon. Gentleman has not been listening. I am talking about an important section of the Budget at this moment — the concessions to charities. The Institute of Charity Fund-Raising Managers has said:

"This is the most exciting and imaginative Budget for charities there has ever been."

The Charities Aid Foundation said it was

"more radical and far-reaching than we could have hoped for."

The noble Lord Goodman, on behalf of charities concerned with the arts, said there was the

"prospect of many good things to come, and come soon."

The Charities VAT Reform Group said the Budget had the "most substantial concessions ever." Mr. Brian Rix of MENCAP said he was "amazed and delighted" by the concessions.

The Budget reflects and seeks to promote the sort of society we wish to see. This is an exemplification of capitalism in the true sense—the voluntary aid secured from higher profits and higher incomes. It is popular capitalism, too. That has been the theme of the Government and of the Budget.

The Government believe in a society in which people own a stake in their own country and in its means of wealth creation. We are engaged in closing the divide between them and us. That is the true route to one nation. It began many years ago with the property owning democracy in terms of home ownership. That has been greatly extended under this Government as a result of the enfranchisement of council tenants. It has been further extended through employee share ownership.

When we came into office in 1979 there were merely 30 all-employee share schemes in operation under the Finance Act 1978. Through improvements of that Act and through the Finance Act 1980, enacted by my predecessor, we have today not 30 schemes, but well over 1,000 schemes, involving 1¼ million employees in all-employee share schemes. There are now 1,375 share option schemes in operation, and that scheme only started in 1984.

[Mr. Lawson]

There are also workers' co-operatives — *[Interruption.]* I think that Labour Members are interested in worker co-operatives. When we took office the number of worker co-operatives in this country was 300. Today there are more than 1,200. *[Interruption.]* The Opposition may cheer, but when they were in office they merely talked about worker co-operatives. They never did anything about them.

The way in which we have pursued privatisation by giving preferential applications to small shareholders has more than doubled the number of individual shareholders in this country. Notably, of course, there is the British Telecom privatisation, which still has 1·6 million individual shareholders, many of them men and women who have never held a share before in their lives. That has opened up new horizons for more and more of our people.

Those horizons will be extended further by the personal equity plans announced in the Budget, which will come into force on 1 January after a period of consultation. Over time I believe that the new personal equity plans, which provide the possibility of investing small sums in equities year in, year out, totally free of all tax—tax on the dividends and on capital gains—will profoundly change the nature of our society. The people's capitalism is on the march, and there will be no stopping it. It will further foster the spirit of enterprise upon which economic success depends. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members find it difficult to accept the fact that the British economy is doing very well.

We have a very important anniversary this year. It is the 10th anniversary of the flight from Manila in 1976. Unlike President Marcos, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) had to flee from Manila before he had even reached it. He got only as far as London airport when he had to turn back. That was at a time when inflation was running at 26 per cent. The exchange rate had fallen by one quarter over the previous three years. This country's net overseas assets are now some £90 billion. At that time, they had fallen to £3 billion. The public sector borrowing requirement, which the right hon. Gentleman regarded in such a cavalier manner, was almost 10 per cent. of gross domestic product. In today's money, that is £33 billion. That is precisely what he would like to see again. The result was collapse, ignominy and going cap in hand to the International Monetary Fund, and the then Labour Government had to have an about turn of their policies.

Let us contrast the situation today. Inflation is at 5 per cent., which is the average since the last election, and we are heading for 3·5 per cent. by the end of this year. We have a growth rate of 3 per cent. We have had 3 per cent. a year steadily since the last general election — *[Interruption.]* Yes, since the general election in 1983 it has been steadily 3 per cent. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East does not even know when the last general election was. I am not surprised. He had to obliterate it from his mind because his party was practically obliterated, too. Our growth rate is 3 per cent., and the prospect is the best for a generation. Indeed, in international competitiveness since 1979——

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lawson: I do not have the time.

Mr. Faulds *rose*——

Mr. Lawson: All right. I shall give way in a moment.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East invited me to make a comparison with 1979. I shall do so. Since 1979, we have grown to the same extent as France and Germany, whereas under the Labour Government we grew very much less. Indeed, in no other six-year period since the war has our relative performance compared with our European competitors been as good as it has been since 1979.

Mr. Faulds: Will the right hon. Gentleman be charitable enough to his private office to admit that he wrote this rubbish?

Mr. Lawson: I am sorry that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman.

Our cumulative surplus on the balance of payments has been more than £20 billion over that period.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East spent a great deal of time talking about manufacturing industry. It is right that I should reply. To do him credit, I think that he has been talking about it for a little while. The Leader of the Opposition speaks with the excessive enthusiasm of someone who has only just discovered its very existence.

The plain fact is that the environment for manufacturing today is better than it has been for a very long time. We have lower oil prices. The reduction in the fuel bill so far is worth over £1 billion to manufacturing industry. Mind you, Mr. Speaker, Labour Members want to take that away. Despite their professed concern for manufacturing industry, they are recommending that we should enter into talks with the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries to ensure that the oil price is higher than it is now. That is what was said by the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) on behalf of the Opposition. I hope that Labour Members will tell manufacturing industry how much higher they would like oil prices to be — *[Interruption.]* We have a lower exchange rate against both Germany and Japan, our principal competitors, and, of course, lower inflation. That does not normally happen when the exchange rate is coming down. Inflation is also coming down sharply. This is an unparalleled opportunity for British industry in general and for manufacturing industry in particular, at a time when we are holding our share of world markets. Between 1981 and 1985 inclusive we have seen the best five-year period in recent history for maintaining our share of world markets.

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lawson: I shall not give way. I have given way a great deal.

Although there has been some decline since 1979 in the share of world trade in manufacturing, our share of world trade has declined very much less than that of France and Germany since 1979. Manufacturing profitability is the highest since 1973. It is from that manufacturing profitability that the resources come for more spending on training and research and development. Of course, I welcome the emphasis that was laid on that, echoing what I said in my Budget speech. Under the Labour Government, the profits were not there and industry was

unable to make that expenditure. Now that the opportunity is there, I hope that industry will take it. As to unemployment—

Dr. M. S. Miller: Will the Chancellor answer a question which is puzzling the nation? If things are so good, why are things so bad?

Mr. Lawson: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to unemployment, which, of course, is bad. We have never sought to disguise the fact that unemployment is bad. It is odd that the Opposition seek to deny what is good in terms of productivity, output, inflation, profitability, overall investment and exports. All these are good. Over a number of years we have introduced special measures to help the unemployed. We announced more this year. In addition—

Mr. John Smith: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lawson: No.

In addition to that, a number of measures are specially designed to encourage small and new businesses which are particularly important for the future of employment. I refer to the improved loan guarantee scheme, the improvement in the business expansion scheme and the improvement on capital transfer tax. The most crippling burden on small and family businesses was capital transfer tax.

None of those measures will reduce unemployment in the way that hon. Members on both sides of the House would like, unless there is a slower growth in unit labour costs. Many of my hon. Friends rightly referred to that. There is no getting away from the fact that we shall not achieve the lower unemployment that we all seek unless unit labour costs rise at a slower rate than among our competitors. That is why, to encourage flexibility in the labour market, I made the profit sharing proposal in the Budget so that a proportion of remuneration related to company profits might receive a tax concession. I am encouraged by the early signs of a positive response. But that is in the long term. In the short term business must take control of its own labour costs. The only solution to unemployment is a more effective, efficient and dynamic economy.

The most favourable climate for industry is the most favourable climate for jobs. There is no way round achieving a better climate for jobs other than by achieving a better climate for industry.

Since the last general election we have seen inflation averaging 5 per cent. and growth averaging 3 per cent. —the best combination for a generation. We have seen manufacturing output average 4 per cent. growth a year, manufacturing productivity average 4¾ per cent. a year, employment rise at a rate of over 750,000 a year, non-oil exports grow at 4½ per cent. a year and real take-home pay at 2½ per cent. a year.

Not only has our position been better than under many previous Governments for a very long time, but, even if one takes the period from 1979, our relative position has improved considerably. We have not yet made as much progress with inflation as we should like, but we are making progress and I forecast that it will be 3½ per cent. by the end of this year. Since we have been in office, inflation has been 1 per cent. higher than the OECD average. But when the Labour party was in power inflation was 6 per cent. higher than the OECD average. That is another measure of the improvement in comparative terms as well as in absolute terms.

The Budget which I introduced on Tuesday is a Budget for the whole of the people. It is a Budget that will continue to build on the success of our previous Budgets. It is a Budget that will encourage the spread of wider share ownership and popular capitalism and I commend it to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 353, Noes 212.

Division No. 111] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durin, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy

Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan

Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen MacKay and
Mr. John McWilliam.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the National Debt and public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply;

(b) for refunding any amount of tax;

(c) for varying the rate of that tax otherwise than in relation to all supplies and importations; or

(d) for any relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description.

Mr. Speaker: I am now required under Standing Order No. 114 to put successively, without further debate, the Questions on each of the Ways and Means motions Nos. 2 to 41 and the motion of procedure, on all of which the Finance Bill is to be brought in. Instead of reading out all of the motions in full, I propose to follow the procedure used in recent years; that is to say, I shall first state the title of the motion and then put the Question that the motion be agreed to.

2. TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Resolved,

That, as from 21st March 1986, the rates of duty on cigarettes and hand-rolling tobacco specified in Schedule 1 to the Tobacco Products Duty Act 1979 shall be increased—

(a) in the case of cigarettes, to an amount equal to 21 per cent. of the retail price plus £30·61 per thousand cigarettes; and

(b) in the case of hand-rolling tobacco, to £49·64 per kilogram:

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

3. HYDROCARBON OIL

Question put,

That, as from 6 o'clock in the evening of 18th March 1986—

(1) the rates of duty specified in section 6(1) of the Hydrocarbon Oil Duties Act 1979 shall be increased—

(a) in the case of light oil, from £0·1794 a litre to £0·1938 a litre; and

(b) in the case of heavy oil, from £0·1515 a litre to £0·1639 a litre; and

(2) in subsection (1) of section 11 of that Act (rebate on heavy oil) for paragraphs *(a)* and *(b)* there shall be substituted—

"*(a)* in the case of fuel oil, of £0·0077 a litre less than the rate at which the duty is for the time being chargeable;

(b) in the case of gas oil, of £0·0110 a litre less than the rate at which the duty is for the time being chargeable; and

(c) in the case of heavy oil other than fuel oil and gas oil, equal to the rate at which the duty is for the time being chargeable"; and

(3) for subsection (2) of section 11 of that Act (definition of types of heavy oil) there shall be substituted—

"(2) In this section—

'fuel oil' means heavy oil which contains in solution an amount of asphaltenes of not less than 0·5 per cent. or which contains less than 0·5 per cent. but not less than 0·1 per cent. of asphaltenes and has a closed flash point not exceeding 150°C; and

'gas oil' means heavy oil of which not more than 50 per cent. by volume distils at a temperature not exceeding 240°C and of which more than 50 per cent. by volume distils at a temperature not exceeding 340°C";

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

The House divided: Ayes 351, Noes 207.

Division No. 112] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*

Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John

Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. John McWilliam.

Question accordingly agreed to.

4. VEHICLES EXCISE DUTY (HACKNEY CARRIAGES AND FARMERS' GOODS VEHICLES)

Resolved,

That the Vehicles (Excise) Act 1971 and the Vehicles (Excise) Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 shall have effect, in relation to licences taken out after 18th March 1986, with the amendments set out below:

But this Resolution shall not authorise the making of amendments which would result in different provisions being in force in different parts of Great Britain;

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

(1) For Part II of Schedule 2 to each of the Acts of 1971 and 1972 (annual rates of duty for hackney carriages) there shall be substituted the following—

PART II

Description of vehicle	Rate of duty
Hackney carriages	£ 52·50 with an additional £1·05 for each person above 20 (excluding the driver) for which the vehicle has seating capacity.

(2) In Schedule 4 to each of the Acts of 1971 and 1972 (annual rates of duty on goods vehicles)—

(a) in Part I, in sub-paragraph (2) of paragraph 6 (farmer's goods vehicle or showman's goods vehicle having a plated gross weight or a plated train weight) in paragraph (b) (weight exceeding 7·5 tonnes but not exceeding 12 tonnes) for "£135" (which applies to farmers' goods vehicles only) there shall be substituted "£155"; and

(b) in Part II, for Tables A(1), C(1) and D(1) (rates for farmers' goods vehicles having plated weight exceeding 12 tonnes) there shall be substituted the Tables set out below:

TABLE A(1)

RATES OF DUTY ON RIGID GOODS VEHICLES EXCEEDING 12 TONNES PLATED GROSS WEIGHT
RATES FOR FARMERS' GOODS VEHICLES

Plated gross weight of vehicle		Rate of duty		
1. Exceeding	2. Not exceeding	3. Two axle vehicle	4. Three axle vehicle	5. Four or more axle vehicle
tonnes	tonnes	£	£	£
12	13	210	170	170
13	14	280	175	175
14	15	350	175	175
15	17	475	180	175
17	19	—	240	175
19	21	—	320	180
21	23	—	420	245
23	25	—	720	330
25	27	—	—	465
27	29	—	—	665
29	30.49	—	—	1,090

TABLE C(1)

RATES OF DUTY ON TRACTOR UNITS EXCEEDING 12 TONNES PLATED TRAIN WEIGHT AND HAVING ONLY 2 AXLES

RATES FOR FARMERS' GOODS VEHICLES

Plated train weight of tractor unit		Rate of duty		
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Exceeding	Not exceeding	For a tractor unit to be used with semi-trailers with any number of axles	For a tractor unit to be used only with semi-trailers with not less than two axles	For a tractor unit to be used only with semi-trailers with not less than three axles
tonnes	tonnes	£	£	£
12	14	235	215	215
14	16	290	220	220
16	18	330	220	220
18	20	385	220	220
20	22	435	270	220
22	23	465	300	220
23	25	530	365	225
25	26	530	405	265
26	28	530	500	345
28	29	555	555	390
29	31	765	765	495
31	33	1,115	1,115	780
33	34	1,230	1,230	1,150
34	36	1,405	1,405	1,405
36	38	1,580	1,580	1,580

TABLE D(1)

RATES OF DUTY ON TRACTOR UNITS EXCEEDING 12 TONNES PLATED TRAIN WEIGHT AND HAVING THREE OR MORE AXLES

RATES FOR FARMERS' GOODS VEHICLES

Plated train weight of tractor unit		Rate of duty		
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Exceeding	Not exceeding	For a tractor unit to be used with semi-trailers with any number of axles	For a tractor unit to be used only with semi-trailers with not less than two axles	For a tractor unit to be used only with semi-trailers with not less than three axles
tonnes	tonnes	£	£	£
12	14	215	215	215
14	20	220	220	220
20	22	270	220	220
22	23	300	220	220
23	25	365	220	220
25	26	405	225	220
26	28	500	230	225
28	29	555	270	230
29	31	765	325	240
31	33	1,115	495	250
33	34	1,140	725	315
34	36	1,205	1,035	475
36	38	1,390	1,390	710

5. VEHICLES EXCISE DUTY (TRADE LICENCES)

Resolved,

That provision be made with respect to the rates of duty applicable to trade licences under section 16 of each of the Vehicles (Excise) Act 1971 and the Vehicles (Excise) Act (Northern Ireland) 1972.

6. ABOLITION OF CERTAIN EXCISE LICENCE DUTIES

Resolved,

That no excise licence duty shall be chargeable on the grant after 18th March 1986 of an excise licence under any provision of the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979 or under section 2 of the Matches and Mechanical Lighters Duties Act 1979:

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

7. GENERAL BETTING DUTY, POOL BETTING DUTY AND BINGO DUTY

Resolved,

That provision may be made extending to Northern Ireland the provisions of the Betting and Gaming Duties Act 1981 relating to general betting duty, pool betting duty and bingo duty.

8. CUSTOMS AND EXCISE DUTIES (WAREHOUSING)

Resolved,

That provision may be made with respect to the matters which may be dealt with in regulations under section 93 of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 (warehousing regulations).

9. VALUE ADDED TAX (REGISTRATION)

Resolved,

That for the purposes of the Value Added Tax Act 1983 provision may be made with respect to the registration of two or more persons as one taxable person.

10. VALUE ADDED TAX (ZERO-RATING)

Resolved,

That provision may be made for the imposition of conditions with respect to the zero-rating of supplies of goods by virtue of section 16(6) of the Value Added Tax Act 1983.

11. VALUE ADDED TAX (RELIEF ON IMPORTATION)

Resolved,

That provision may be made with respect to conditional relief from value added tax under section 19 of the Value Added Tax Act 1983.

12. VALUE ADDED TAX (PROVISION OF ACCOMMODATION)

Resolved,

That provision may be made with respect to the valuation for the purposes of value added tax of certain supplies of services consisting in the provision of accommodation.

13. INCOME TAX (CHARGE AND RATES FOR 1986-87)

Question put,

That—

(1) Income tax for the year 1986-87 shall be charged at the basic rate of 29 per cent. and, in respect of so much of an individual's total income as exceeds £17,200 (the basic rate limit as determined under subsection (4) of section 24 of the Finance Act 1980—indexation), at such higher rates as are specified in the Table below:

TABLE

Higher rate bands	*Higher rate*
The first £3,000...	40 per cent.
The next £5,200...	45 per cent.
The next £7,900...	50 per cent.
The next £7,900...	55 per cent.
The remainder	60 per cent.

(2) Section 24(4) of the Finance Act 1980 (indexation of thresholds) shall not, so far as it relates to the higher rate bands, apply for the year 1986-87:

(3) This Resolution shall not require any change to be made in the amounts deductable or repayable under section 204 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 (pay as you earn) before 18th May 1986:

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

The House divided: Ayes 343, Noes 43.

Division No. 113] **[10.30 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon

Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hume, John
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

NOES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Beith, A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clay, Robert
Cohen, Harry
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Freud, Clement
Godman, Dr Norman
Hancock, Michael
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Heffer, Eric S.
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Livsey, Richard
Madden, Max
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mikardo, Ian
Nellist, David
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Gordon
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. James Wallace and
Mr. Robert Maclean.

Question accordingly agreed to.

14. INCOME TAX (INDEXED PERSONAL RELIEFS ETC.): OPERATIVE DATE FOR PAYE

Resolved,

That, for the year 1986-87, in subsection (7) of section 24 of the Finance Act 1980 (which specifies the date from which indexed changes in income tax thresholds and allowances are to be brought into account for the purposes of PAYE) for "5th May" there shall be substituted "18th May":

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

15. Relief for interest (limit for 1986-87)

Resolved,

That, for the year 1986-87, the qualifying maximum referred to in paragraphs 5(1) and 24(3) of Schedule 1 to the Finance Act 1974 (limit on relief for interest on certain loans for the purchase or improvement of land) shall be £30,000:

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

16. Advance corporation tax (rate for financial year 1986)

Resolved,

That the rate of advance corporation tax for the financial year 1986 shall be twenty-nine seventy-firsts.

17. Building societies

Resolved,

That provision may be made with respect to the treatment for the purposes of income tax and corporation tax of dividends and interest payable in respect of shares in or deposits with or loans to a building society.

18. Shares and rights to acquire shares obtained by directors and employees

Resolved,

That charges to income tax may be imposed by provisions amending section 186 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 (directors and employees granted rights to acquire shares) and section 79 of the Finance Act 1972 (share incentive schemes).

19. Occupational pension schemes

Resolved,

That provision may be made with respect to—

(a) payments to employers out of funds held for the purposes of occupational pension schemes; and

(b) exemptions and reliefs from tax under section 21 of the Finance Act 1970.

20. Enterprise allowance

Resolved,

That provision (including retrospective provision) may be made about enterprise allowance.

21. Business expansion scheme

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending Schedule 5 to the Finance Act 1983.

22. Company reconstructions

Resolved,

That provision may be made with respect to relief from tax where a company ceases to carry on a trade or part of a trade.

23. Loans to participators

Resolved,

That provision may be made with respect to tax chargeable under section 286 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970.

24. Charities

Resolved,

That provision may be made with respect to—

(a) exemption under section 360 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 (exemptions for charities from tax under Schedule A to F);

(b) charges to tax where assets are disposed of by charities; and

(c) covenanted payments to charities and payments by one charity to another.

25. Value added tax penalties etc. (income tax and corporation tax)

Resolved,

That charges to income tax and corporation tax may be imposed by provisions with respect to penalties, interest and surcharge under Chapter II of Part I of the Finance Act 1985 (value added tax).

26. Associated companies (oil and gas industry)

Resolved,

That provision may be made extending the cases in which two companies are associated with one another for the purposes of Part II of the Oil Taxation Act 1975.

27. Capital allowances (machinery and plant etc.)

Resolved,

That provision may be made with respect to allowances in respect of expenditure on the provision of machinery or plant for leasing and on the provision of certain vehicles.

28. Capital allowances (mineral exploration and extraction)

Resolved,

That provision may be made with respect to allowances under Chapter III of Part I of the Capital Allowances Act 1968 (mines, oil wells etc.)

29. Dual resident trusts: capital gains tax

Resolved,

That provision may be made for denying or recovering relief under section 79 of the Finance Act 1980 (general relief for gifts) where the transferee is a body of trustees which is or becomes treated as resident both in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

30. Securities (income tax, capital gains tax and corporation tax)

Resolved,

That charges to income tax, capital gains tax and corporation tax may be imposed by provisions about events occurring after 18th March 1986 in relation to securities.

31. Stamp duty (reconstructions etc.)

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall have effect for the period beginning 25th March 1986 and ending 31 days after the earliest of the dates mentioned in section 50(2) of the Finance Act 1973—

(1) In section 55 of the Finance Act 1927 and in section 4 of the Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 1928 (reconstructions and amalgamations) in paragraph (B) of subsection (1) for the words "not be chargeable" there shall be substituted the words "be chargeable at the rate mentioned in subsection (9) of this section" and for the words "nor shall any such duty be chargeable" there shall be substituted the word "or".

(2) In consequence, each of those sections shall be further amended as follows—

(a) at the beginning of paragraph (B) of subsection (1) there shall be inserted the words "If a claim is made under this section";

(b) in paragraph (*a*) of the proviso to subsection (1) the words from "either it" to "liable or" and from "either that" to "duty or" shall be omitted, and in paragraph (*c*) of that proviso the words "for exemption" shall be omitted;

(c) in subsection (2) for the words "for exemption under paragraph (B) of subsection (1) of" there shall be substituted the word "under";

(d) in subsection (5) the words "for exemption" shall be omitted;

(e) in subsection (6), in paragraph (*a*) the words "for expemption from duty" shall be omitted, in paragraph (*c*) for the word "exemption" there shall be substituted the word "claim", and in the words following paragraph (*c*) for the word "exemption" there shall be substituted the word "claim", for the word "remitted" (in the first place where it occurs) there shall be substituted the word "unpaid" and the words from "in the case of duty remitted under paragraph (A)" to "the said subsection" shall be omitted;

(f) in subsection (7) for the words "for exemption from duty under subsection (1) of" there shall be substituted the word "under", for the words "such exemption" there shall be substituted the words "such a claim to be allowed" and for the words "have been remitted" there shall be substituted the words "not have been chargeable".

(3) At the end of each of those sections there shall be inserted—

"(9) The rate is the rate of 50p for every £100 or part of £100 of the amount or value of the consideration for the sale to which the instrument gives effect."

(4) In paragraph 12 of Schedule 18 to the Finance Act 1980 (demergers) for sub-paragraph (1) there shall be substituted—

"(1) If a document executed solely for the purpose of effecting an exempt distribution is chargeable with stamp duty under the heading 'Conveyance or Transfer on Sale' in Schedule 1 to the Stamp Act 1891, the rate at which the duty is charged under that heading shall be the rate of 50p for every £100 or part of £100 of the amount or value of the consideration for the sale to which the document gives effect.

(1A) If a document executed solely for the purpose of effecting an exempt distribution is chargeable with stamp duty under the heading "Conveyance or Transfer on Sale" in Schedule 1 to the Stamp Act 1891, it shall not be treated as duly stamped unless it is stamped in accordance with section 12 of the Stamp Act 1891 with a particular stamp denoting that it is duly stamped."

(5) In paragraph 12(3) of Schedule 18 to the Finance Act 1980 for the words "this paragraph" there shall be substituted the words "sub-paragraph (2) above".

(6) In section 78 of the Finance Act 1985 (takeovers) the following shall be substituted for subsection (2)—

"(2) If the instrument transferring the shares in company B by way of the exchange is chargeable with stamp duty under the heading 'Conveyance or Transfer on Sale' in Schedule 1 to the Stamp Act 1891, the rate at which the duty is charged under that heading shall be the rate of 50p for every £100 or part of £100 of the amount or value of the consideration for the sale to which the instrument gives effect."

(7) In section 79 of the Finance Act 1985 (voluntary winding-up: transfer of shares) the following shall be substituted for subsection (2)—

"(2) If the instrument transferring the shares in company B to company A is chargeable with stamp duty under the heading 'Conveyance or Transfer on Sale' in Schedule 1 to the Stamp Act 1891, the rate at which the duty is charged under that heading shall be the rate of 50p for every £100 or part of £100 of the amount or value of the consideration for the sale to which the instrument gives effect."

(8) In section 78 and in section 79 of the Finance Act 1985—

(a) in subsection (3) for the word "ignored" there shall be substituted the words "treated as reduced by 50 per cent.";

(b) subsection (9) shall be omitted;

(c) in subsection (10) for "(3)" there shall be substituted "(2) or (3)".

(9) This Resolution applies to any instrument which is executed after 24th March 1986 unless—

(a) it is executed in pursuance of an unconditional contract made on or before 18th March 1986, or

(b) it transfers stock or marketable securities and is executed in pursuance of a general offer (for the stock or securities) which became unconditional as to acceptances on or before 18th March 1986.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of section 50 of the Finance Act 1973.

32. STAMP DUTY (ACQUISITIONS)

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall have effect for the period beginning 25th March 1986 and ending 31 days after the earliest of the dates mentioned in section 50(2) of the Finance Act 1973—

(1) This Resolution applies where a company (the acquiring company) acquires the whole or part of an undertaking of another company (the target company) in pursuance of a scheme for the reconstruction of the target company.

(2) If the first and second conditions (as defined below) are fulfilled, stamp duty under the heading "Conveyance or Transfer on Sale" in Schedule 1 to the Stamp Act 1891 shall not be chargeable on an instrument executed for the purposes of or in connection with the transfer of the undertaking or part.

(3) An instrument on which stamp duty is not chargeable by virtue only of paragraph (2) above shall not be taken to be duly stamped unless it is stamped with the duty to which it would be liable but for that paragraph or it has, in accordance with section 12 of the Stamp Act 1891, been stamped with a particular stamp denoting that it is not chargeable with any duty.

(4) The first condition is that the registered office of the acquiring company is in the United Kingdom and that the consideration for the acquisition—

(a) consists of or includes the issue of shares in the acquiring company to all the shareholders of the target company;

(b) includes nothing else (if anything) but the assumption or discharge by the acquiring company of liabilities of the target company.

(5) The second condition is that—

(a) the acquisition is effected for bona fide commercial reasons and does not form part of a scheme or arrangement of which the main purpose, or one of the main purposes, is avoidance of liability to stamp duty, income tax, corporation tax or capital gains tax,

(b) after the acquisition has been made, each shareholder of each of the companies is a shareholder of the other, and

(c) after the acquisition has been made, the proportion of shares of one of the companies held by any shareholder is the same as the proportion of shares of the other company held by that shareholder.

(6) This Resolution applies to any instrument which is executed after 24th March 1986 unless it is executed in pursuance of an unconditional contract made on or before 18th March 1986.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of section 50 of the Finance Act 1973.

33. STAMP DUTY (LOAN CAPITAL)

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall have effect for the period beginning 25th March 1986 and ending 31 days after the earliest of the dates mentioned in section 50(2) of the Finance Act 1973—

(1) The following provisions shall cease to have effect—

(a) in section 62 of the Finance Act 1963, subsections (2) and (6) (commonwealth stock);

(b) in section 11 of the Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 1963, subsections (2) and (5) (commonwealth stock);

(c) section 29 of the Finance Act 1967 (local authority capital);

(d) section 6 of the Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 (local authority capital);

(e) section 126 of the Finance Act 1967 (loan capital).

(2) Stamp duty under the heading "Bearer Instrument" in Schedule 1 to the Stamp Act 1891 shall not be chargeable on the issue of an instrument which relates to loan capital or on the transfer of the loan capital constituted by or transferable by means of, such an instrument.

(3) Stamp duty shall not be chargeable on an instrument which transfers loan capital issued or raised by—

(a) the financial support fund of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development,

(b) the Inter-American Development Bank, or

(c) an organisation which was a designated international organisation at the time of the transfer (whether or not it was such an organisation at the time the loan capital was issued or raised).

(4) Stamp duty shall not be chargeable on an instrument which transfers short-term loan capital.

(5) Where stamp duty under the heading "Conveyance or Transfer on Sale" in Schedule 1 to the Stamp Act 1891 is chargeable on an instrument which transfers loan capital, the rate at which the duty is charged under that heading shall be the rate of 50p for every £100 or part of £100 of the amount or value of the consideration for the sale to which the instrument gives effect.

(6) In this Resolution "loan capital" means—

(a) any debenture stock, corporation stock or funded debt, by whatever name known, issued by a body corporate or other body of persons (which here includes a local authority and any body whether formed or established in the United Kingdom or elsewhere);

(b) any capital raised by such a body if the capital is borrowed or has the character of borrowed money, and whether it is in the form of stock or any other form;

(c) stock or marketable securities issued by the government of any country or territory outside the United Kingdom.

(7) In this Resolution "short-term loan capital" means loan capital the date (or latest date) for the repayment of which is not more than five years after the date on which it is issued or raised.

(8) In this Resolution "designated international organisation" means an international organisation designated for the purposes of section 126 of the Finance Act 1984 by an order made under subsection (1) of that section.

(9) In construing sections 80(3) and 81(3) of the Finance Act 1985 (definitions by reference to section 126 of the Finance Act 1976) the effect of this Resolution shall be ignored.

(10) This Resolution applies to any instrument which falls within section 60(1) of the Finance Act 1963 and is issued after 24th March 1986.

(11) This Resolution applies to any instrument which falls within section 60(2) of that Act if the loan capital constituted by or transferable by means of it is transferred after 24th March 1986.

(12) This Resolution applies, in the case of instruments not falling within section 60(1) or (2) of that Act, to any instrument which is executed after 24th March 1986, unless it is executed in pursuance of a contract made on or before 18th March 1986.

(13) In this Resolution references to section 60(1) of the Finance Act 1963 include references to section 9(1)*(a)* of the Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 1963 and references to section 60(2) of the former Act include references to section 9(1)*(b)* of the latter.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of section 50 of the Finance Act 1973.

34. STAMP DUTY (BEARER LETTERS OF ALLOTMENT ETC.)

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall have effect for the period beginning 25th March 1986 and ending 31 days after the earliest of the dates mentioned in section 50(2) of the Finance Act 1973—

(1) In Schedule 1 to the Stamp Act 1891, in the heading "Bearer Instrument", paragraph 2 of the exemptions (bearer letter of allotment etc. required to be surrendered not later than six months after issue) shall be omitted.

(2) This Resolution applies to any instrument which falls within section 60(1) of the Finance Act 1963 and is issued after 24th March 1986, unless it is issued by a company in pursuance of a general offer for its shares and the offer became unconditional as to acceptances on or before 18th March 1986.

(3) This Resolution applies to any instrument which falls within section 60(2) of that Act if the stock constituted by or transferable by means of it is transferred after 24th March 1986.

(4) In this Resolution the reference to section 60(1) of the Finance Act 1963 includes a reference to section 9(1)*(a)* of the Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 1963 and the reference to section 60(2) of the former Act includes a reference to section 9(1)*(b)* of the latter.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of section 50 of the Finance Act 1973.

35. STAMP DUTY (LETTERS OF ALLOTMENT)

Resolved,

That provision may be made for restricting the exemption from stamp duty provided by section 65(1) of the Finance Act 1963 and section 14(1) of the Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 1963.

36. STAMP DUTY (COMPANY'S PURCHASE OF OWN SHARES)

Resolved,

That provision may be made for charging stamp duty on returns delivered under section 169 of the Companies Act 1985 or Article 53 of the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1982.

37. STAMP DUTY RESERVE TAX

Resolved,

That a tax shall be charged in respect of events occurring after 18th march 1986 in relation to securities.

38. TAX UNDER CAPITAL TRANSFER TAX ACT 1984

Question put,

That charges to tax under the Capital Transfer Tax Act 1984 may be imposed—

(a) by provisions relating to deaths occurring on or after 18th March 1986;

(b) by provisions removing relief referable to mutual transfers where at least one of the transfers occurs on or after that date; and

(c) by provisions relating to relief under Chapter I (business property) or Chapter II (agricultural property) of Part V of that Act in the case of transfers of value on or after that date.

The House divided: Ayes 340, Noes 203.

Division No. 114] **[10.43 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount

Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin

Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Chris Smith.

Question accordingly agreed to.

39. Oil Taxation: Light Gases

Resolved,

That, for the purpose of petroleum revenue tax, provision may be made with respect to the valuation of light gases.

40. Oil Taxation: Attribution of Chargeable Receipts and Allowable Expenditure

Resolved,

That, in any case where—

(a) tariff receipts or disposal receipts arising in a chargeable period ending after 30th June 1982, or

(b) allowable expenditure, within the meaning of Part II of Schedule 1 to the Oil Taxation Act 1983,

fall to be (or have at any time since the passing of the said Act of 1983 fallen to be) attributed to one of two or more oil fields and development decisions relating to those fields were first made on the same day, provision may be made for determining which of those decisions is to be presumed to have been made first.

41. Relief from Tax (Incidental and Consequential Charges)

Resolved

That it is expedient to authorise any incidental or consequential charges to any duty or tax (including charges having retrospective effect) which may arise from provisions designed in general to afford relief from tax.

Procedure (Future Taxation)

Resolved,

That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the practice of the House relating to matters which may be included in Finance Bills, any Finance Bill of the present Session may contain provision taking effect in a future year with respect to—

(a) the treatment for the purposes of value added tax of fuel which is or is to be provided or appropriated by a taxable person for private use in a motor vehicle;

(b) relief from investment in corporate trades; and

(c) relief in respect of payments to charities.

Bill ordered to be brought in upon the foregoing resolutions by the Chairman of Ways and Means, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary Fowler, Mr. Secretary Ridley, Mr. Secretary Baker, Mr. Kenneth Clarke, Mr. John MacGregor, Mr. Secretary Channon Mr. John Moore, Mr. Ian Stewart and Mr. Peter Brooke.

Finance

Bill to grant certain duties, to alter other duties and to amend the law relating to the National Debt and the Public Revenue, and to make further provision in connection with finance, presented accordingly by Mr. John Moore and read the First time; to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 117.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the consideration of the Lords Amendment to the Museum of London Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Museum of London Bill

Lords amendment considered.

New Clause

REPORTS

Lords amendment: After clause 4, insert:

" . Not later than 31st March 1989 and subsequently at intervals not exceeding three years the Secretary of State shall lay before each House of Parliament a report on the exercise of the functions of the Board of Governors of the Museum of London since the commencement of this Act or, in the case of the second and subsequent reports, since the end of the period to which the previous report related."

10.57 pm

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The moving of the new clause by the Government in another place fulfilled a commitment that I gave to the House on Report on 3 February. The object of the amendment is to ensure, by a statutory obligation, that regular reports on the Museum of London's activities are produced and laid before Parliament. The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) will recall that I made it clear on 3 February that, were we to impose that statutory obligation on the museum itself, there would be an element of hybridity in the proceedings. For that reason, we moved a new clause in another place.

The Museum of London already produces regular reports and I have no doubt that it would continue to do so without a statutory obligation being placed upon it. However, persuasive arguments were put forward in the earlier stages that, because of the important accountability principle, there was a good case for enshrining the reporting commitment into a statutory obligation. The Government agree and so proposed the amendment.

I stress another matter about the wording. The new clause provides for reports to be produced not less frequently than every three years. I emphasise that there is no intention to change the practice of producing annual reports. The museum will continue to do that. As I explained in Committee, it would be an overtight imposition to require the museum by law to produce reports every year. The words follow the precedent for statutory reporting obligations on other major museums under the National Heritage Act 1983.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): On behalf of the Opposition I welcome one of the few changes that we have managed to secure. The new clause is helpful and I am grateful to the Minister for his clarification on the three years or one year reporting obligation.

I welcome the clause, but the Opposition do not welcome the Bill. We shall reverse its provisions when we return to power. In the meantime it will be convenient to have a report on the workings of the museum. I support the new clause.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for the new clause. The Opposition moved an amendment that there should be an annual report. I suggested that a three-year period would be wiser because of the charitable nature of the organisation and because of the practice among museums in general. Not only should one remember that the Museum of London already produces a report annually,

[Mr. Jeremy Hanley]

but I am certain that if something is to be received from organisations outside local government, such as industry and, under the new Budget, from individuals who might find it more attractive to give money to such causes, reports are important because they can help to raise even more money through imformative presentation.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): My right hon. and hon. Friends welcome the proposal. In view of the Budget and the change in the personae of those who might contribute to the museum, I urge the Minister not to stray too far from an annual report. In a changing scene it is immensely helpful to accountability for a report not only to be there, but to be seen to be there.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): I dashed into the House in the hope of hearing the Minister, but I was just too late. The position as I understand it now seems satisfactory. There is to be an obligation to produce a report every three years, but that does not preclude an annual report, which has been of considerable value to those interested in the museum, and in museums generally. I join in the general accord for the proposal.

Question put and agreed to.

Coal Industry

11.4 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): I beg to move,

That the draft Redundant Mineworkers and Concessionary Coal (Payments Schemes) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 10 March, be approved.

I understand that it might be in order to take both orders together.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With the agreement of the House, we shall take both orders together.

Mr. Roy Mason (Barnsley, Central): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If we are taking both orders together, are we restricted to only 90 minutes' debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is so. The House has decided to take the two orders together which means a debate of 1½ hours on both orders, not three hours.

Mr. Hunt: When on 28 March 1985 I commended to the House the Redundant Mineworkers and Concessionary Coal (Payments Schemes) Amendment Order 1985 I warned that, although the long and damaging strike which the industry had suffered was over, its consequences would be with us for some considerable time. One important consequence was that many miners failed to pay sufficient national insurance contributions during the tax year 1984-85 to qualify for full contributions-based social security benefits on claims falling within the 1986 benefit year. The purpose of the present Redundant Mineworkers and Concessionary Coal (Payments Schemes) Order is both to provide for the continued operation of the schemes and to amend the existing terms to take account of this consequence.

The provisions of the scheme now being introduced were announced in outline by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy on 19 December 1985. They follow closely for full-time employees those of the present schemes which expire on 29 March, providing for essentially the same range of lump sum and weekly benefits; but they provide important additional protection for those older men whose redundancy date falls within the 1986 social security benefit year and who, for the reasons I have already mentioned, fail to qualify for full state unemployment benefit or sickness benefit.

As right hon. and hon. Members who take an interest in the operation of the redundancy scheme will know, to be entitled to weekly benefits under the present rules a man must, with certain limited exceptions, either satisfy the conditions for receipt of unemployment benefit, sickness benefit or invalidity pension or, with regard to unemployment benefit, satisfy those conditions but for entitlement to that benefit being exhausted. This rule, which has been part of the scheme since it was first introduced, was designed to ensure a proper integration of continuing weekly payments under the scheme with social security benefits.

In the present circumstances, however, it has an unfortunate consequence since it means that an older man whose redundancy falls within the 1986 social security benefit year and who lacks sufficient national insurance contributions to qualify for unemployment benefit or sickness benefit stands to lose the benefits for which he failed to make adequate contributions and his weekly benefits under the redundant mineworkers payments scheme.

The present order seeks to overcome this difficulty in articles 9 and 10. Article 10 provides that where such a man is unemployed or unavailable for work through sickness, provided he has an entitlement to credits on national insurance contributions he is not precluded from weekly benefits under the scheme even if he fails to satisfy the contribution conditions for entitlement to unemployment benefit or sickness benefit. That is, provided he meets essentially the same general requirement as before, other than the contribution requirement, he may receive weekly payments under the redundant mineworkers payments scheme. Article 9 then allows the Secretary of State to pay such a man additional scheme benefits as well, together with any unemployment benefit, sickness benefit, invalidity pension or severe disablement allowance to which he is entitled, equal the total amount of those benefits to which he would have been entitled but for the failure to satisfy the contribution conditions. In short, he may receive make-up payments under the redundant mineworkers payment scheme to make good his loss of social security benefits.

Clearly it would be inequitable if men who had failed to pay full national insurance contributions in 1984-85 and received these make-up payments were in consequence better off overall than those who did pay and would therefore satisfy the existing rules. For this reason, the order also provides, in article 18, for a reduction in the lump sum payable to men who receive topped-up weekly payments. It is not practicable for the amount of that reduction to equal for each man the precise figure which he might have paid in national insurance contributions had he continued working. That figure is anyway ultimately a matter of conjecture. The article provides, therefore, for a uniform deduction from lump sum entitlement of £600 where the man has no entitlement to unemployment benefit, or £550 if he has some entitlement but at less than the full rate. These figures represent a reasonable reduction taking account of the average national insurance contributions paid by those falling into the two categories and those typically paid by men who worked throughout the period of the strike.

There is one further provision in the draft order which I should mention. This concerns the treatment of former part-time workers who were employed for fewer than 30 hours per week. The benefits available under the redundant mineworkers payments scheme have been improved substantially under the present Government, notably in 1983, 1984 and under the present order. It is a generous scheme primarily designed fully to recompense those full-time employees who help the industry through its present period of necessary restructuring by taking voluntary redundancy. However, I suggest there can be no justification for providing those who take redundancy with higher weekly earnings than when they worked, nor for paying lump sums on the scale now provided under the scheme to former part-time employees who may have been employed for as little as 16 hours per week. The new order provides, therefore, that to be entitled to full scheme benefits a former employee must have been employed for 30 or more hours per week in the relevant tax year.

Before discussing the second of the two draft orders before us tonight, I think it would be right for me to say something about the future of the coal industry and the

[Mr. Hunt]

RMPS. In the past 12 months, the industry has made giant strides towards economic viability. Productivity has increased by one quarter and much uneconomic capacity has gone. This has been achieved without a single compulsory redundancy. All those who wished to remain in the industry have been able to do so. In the nature of things, an extractive industry can offer no guarantee that there will never be redundancies; and the future size and prosperity of the coal industry must depend on the success of men and management in making it competitive. There is no doubt that the recent fall in the price of oil increases the severity of the competition which the coal industry faces, and will make it necessary for the industry to strengthen still further the efforts it is making to eliminate losses.

Nevertheless, the Government's view is that the time is approaching when the NCB can, like the great majority of employers, take more responsibility for deciding and financing the redundancy terms which it offers. The new order will operate to the end of the National Coal Board's 1986-87 financial year, when the power to make schemes under the Coal Industry Act 1977 expires. It is right for me now to make it clear that it is not the Government's intention to introduce new legislation extending the power to make schemes beyond that date.

To enable payments to be made under the new schemes, it is necessary also to provide financial headroom. Section 4(3) of the Coal Industry Act 1983 increased the limit on aggregate cumulative expenditure on Redundant Mineworkers and Concessionary Coal Payments Schemes under the 1977 Act to £1,200 million. Section 3(3) of the Coal Industry Act 1985 gave the Secretary of State power to increase that limit by order made with the approval of the Treasury up to £1,800 million. The Coal Industry (Limit on Payments in Respect of Redundant Mineworkers) Order 1986 increases the limit to that figure.

When the 1985 Coal Industry Bill was presented to Parliament, it was impossible to know how many men would leave the industry under the redundant mineworkers and concessionary coal payments schemes then operating, nor what, if any, scheme would follow expiry of that scheme in March 1986. We were therefore faced with the choice of increasing the existing limit on expenditure to a figure so large that it could accommodate any conceivable circumstance, or providing for the power to increase the existing figure by order as and when circumstances required. As hon. and right hon. Members know, we adopted the latter course. The present order exercises the power then provided and provides the financial headroom to enable payments to be made under the new redundancy order. I should emphasise that the increase of £600 million in the limit of expenditure is not based upon an estimate of numbers who might leave in the coming year; it is simply the maximum envisaged in the 1985 Act and therefore compatible with the widest possible range of outcomes.

To conclude, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government have demonstrated by their financial support to the NCB over the past few years that they are committed to the creation of an efficient, competitive and viable coal industry; an industry capable of contributing to the national economy rather than one which must continually come cap in hand for further support; an industry with a proud future to match its proud past, capable of providing long-term, secure jobs with good earnings for those who work in it. The Government have further demonstrated by the redundancy terms they have made available and by their support for the National Coal Board's enterprise subsidiary, their equal commitment to ensuring that those who leave the industry as part of the present restructuring and their communities are as far as possible compensated and protected.

There are signs that the industry is now coming right. Productivity, which for so many years grew at a rate which was the despair of all those who cared and could only spell long-term disaster, improves month by month. Costs of production are falling.

The industry is not yet at a point at which we can say that all the difficulties are over, but the portents are good. The industry is leaner and fitter than it has been for many years. We can all see that with further efforts, and just a little good fortune, the industry may enter a new and prosperous era. The Government are committed to that goal and to providing the support necessary to make it possible. As part of that process I hope that right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House will welcome the orders.

11.14 pm

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): We are asked to approve an increase from £1,200 million to £1,800 million because the Redundant Mineworkers and Concessionary Coal (Payments Schemes) Order 1984 expires at the end of the month. The revised orders extend the scheme until 28 March 1987 with some principal changes, which allow us to consider what has prompted them and to look at the coal industry today.

A new definition has been added to cover "coal industry employment". There have also been some technical alterations to the definitions of "days of employment", "industrial accident" and "industrial disease". I hope that the Minister will comment further on those when he replies. A definition has also been included to cover "severe disablement allowance". The definition of "subsidiary" has been amended to bring it up to date from the Companies Act 1948 to the Companies Act 1985.

The Minister tried to explain that under the present scheme part-time workers are not discriminated against. However, the new order introduces a pro rata reduction in benefits, and that is contained in article 5(1)*(a)* by reference to 30 hours and the pro rata extension of the weekly benefit table down from £35 to £10. There is also a consequential amendment to article 7 relating to the adjustment of basic benefit whereby a reference to employment on average for not less than 30 hours a week is introduced. Those amendments are clearly designed to reduce benefits in future to part-time employees in the industry.

As a result of the 1984-85 strike, a number of members, as the Minister indicated, have insufficient national insurance contributions to qualify for unemployment benefit in the benefit year commencing January 1986. That, in turn, means that men aged 50 and over who would normally have qualified for weekly benefit would be barred by virtue of failing to establish a right to unemployment benefit. To overcome that problem, the new order makes provision for an additional weekly benefit by switching the second order of unemployment benefit equivalent to be applied to the first year of scheme entitlement for unemployment benefit which will be

payable in the second year. For example, under the new arrangements a person who is made redundant from the beginning of the tax year 1986-87, by registering as unemployed, will be given a credit towards the national insurance which will bring him back into entitlement to unemployment benefit in 1987 for 52 weeks. The Minister referred to the statement made by the Secretary of State on 19 December.

The Minister may want to correct me, but my information is that there will be a reduction in redundancy pay as a consequence of that arrangement. I hope that the Minister will confirm that when he replies.

The only other principal change is the revision of the weekly benefits tables in appendix 4 to select the increases in the level of unemployment benefit introduced with effect from November 1985. Apart from that, we are dealing only with the tables changing in relation to lump sum payments.

Tonight we are asked to approve the due process of law and legal enactment by discussing these orders affecting the coal industry. It is a strange irony that although such processes apply to Parliament, which we would defend, they do not apply to the working and administration of the National Coal Board. I will discuss three aspects of the board's conduct which could be related to the legality of the orders which we are being asked to approve this evening.

First, I shall deal with the new modified colliery review procedure. The old procedure gave the NCB the power to act as judge, jury and executioner. The new procedure, upon which many high hopes were pinned, has been dashed by the NCB's attitude, for example, to the Bates colliery closure and its decision to ignore the recommendations of the independent arbiter that the colliery should remain open.

The NCB has clearly interpreted the new procedure as allowing it to be the judge, jury and executioner on colliery closures. The NCB has done enormous damage by its action and destroyed any faith that people working in the industry may have had in the new procedure. There will be a further test tomorrow when the Kingsley Drift colliery in Yorkshire is considered under this new procedure.

The NCB continues to flout any form of judicial process and natural justice, and this is highlighted by its attitude to miners who were victims of the strike which ended over a year ago.

Industrial tribunals have given verdicts of unfair dismissals and recommended that miners should be reinstated. Union leaders have attempted to regain normality in those areas in the spirit of consultation and conciliation. However, in all but a few instances these attempts and recommendations have met a stony-faced reaction by the NCB.

The NCB has been given a legal opinion by no less an authority than the Attorney-General that it is in breach of the law if it tampers with the miners' pension fund and uses striking miners, in a dispute over a year old, as an excuse to delay the wage increases of members of the National Union of Mineworkers, unless that increase is tied to amending the miners' pension fund. Despite the legal advice that the NCB would be in breach of the law, it intends to spend money, which is not its own, on what could be an expensive legal action.

We need changes in the NCB, and a start should be made by the Government. They should ask the present chairman of the NCB, Mr. Ian MacGregor, to go now rather than in September. The industry and the country have had to put up with this expensive liability for too long.

The backcloth to the orders signals a further contraction of manpower in the mining industry. There will be more pit closures and more redundancies. The figures released for the past year show that 30,000 jobs have been lost. That is depressing. If the Minister is not concerned, the House certainly is concerned about the continued contraction of manpower in the industry.

The House is aware of the problems of energy provision as a consequence of the massive drop in oil price, referred to by the Minister. We were reminded of that when we debated the EEC document on state aids to the coal industry. It has not gone unobserved by some of us that, like baying wolves, the leaders of the Central Electricity Generating Board are going for the British coal industry in this energy price war which is confronting many nations in the world. The CEGB wants to import more foreign coal. It does not care whether it is Polish or South African coal, as long as the price is right. I hope that the Minister will tell us that the Central Electricity Generating Board has been told that it is not in the business of creating unemployment in the British coal industry by its quest for more imports of foreign coal.

I endorse what the Minister said about the performance of the industry and the way that the miners are responding to the needs and to the call of the nation to produce more coal. We do not oppose these orders, but the Minister must reply to some of the issues that I have raised, because they are of great importance not only to people working in the industry but to my right hon. and hon. Friends.

11.27 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I recently had the honour to be invited to a meeting in my constituency organised by the local National Farmers Union. I was slightly surprised when one old farmer told me that farmers did far better under Labour Governments and coal miners did better under Conservative Governments. That is probably just as well, because I have only about 100 farmers but more than 2,000 coal miners and a large number of retired miners in my constituency. On pondering this, I have to admit that there is some truth in the words of the old farmer. I do not want to go into the problems of agriculture, but history seems to bear out his view that coal miners have done substantially better under Conservative Governments.

It was under the Macmillan Government that coal pools were first arranged to provide fuel for miners over the age of 60. The Heath Government centralised those pools and backdated the concessionary coal allowances to miners aged over 55 on retirement and also backdated it to 1969. In 1983, this Government further reduced to 50 the age for concessionary coal and took over funding for the scheme from the coal pools. In doing that, the Government left out large numbers of miners who were under 60 when they were made redundant because of the massive pit closures of the Wilson Government in the 1960s. During that period, nearly half as many miners were made redundant in my constituency alone as were proposed by the National Coal Board in 1983 and 1984 for the whole country. Some 10,000 miners in my area were made redundant during the 1960s compared with only 20,000 proposed redundancies for the whole country in 1983 and 1984. Those proposed redundancies led to the Scargill strike.

[Mr. Phillip Oppenheim]

Many of the miners who were made compulsorily redundant under the Wilson Government in the 1960s have had a raw deal. Some worked in the pits from the age of 14 for as many as 30 years in conditions that were far worse than conditions pertaining in the pits today. In the mid-1960s many of them received letters from the chairman of the NCB telling them that the coal industry was set to expand and that their jobs were totally secure. Nonetheless, they were made redundant or at best offered jobs many miles away. When they were made compulsorily redundant under the Wilson Government they were given a pittance in redundancy money, far less in real terms than miners receive today. Furthermore, if they were under the age of 60 when they were made redundant, as many of them were, they received no concessionary coal, even though many of them had contributed to coal pools for miners aged over 60 in the reasonable expectation that they themselves would benefit from those pools. These are the forgotten miners. Their votes were taken for granted by their representatives for too long, and as a result, they got a raw deal.

It is true that most of the advances in the coal industry have come about during the periods of Conservative Governments—better redundancy terms, higher wages and far better concessionary coal allowances. Therefore, there is a precedent for the Government to make further improvements, and to allow retired miners the retrospective benefit, as happened in 1973. I accept that cost has to be a key factor, and I understand that recent estimates by the NCB put the cost of retrospectively extending concessionary coal to miners made redundant in the 1960s at some £3 million. This sounds a very large sum, but it represents only 10 per cent. of the total cost of the concessionary coal scheme that the Government already fund. Furthermore, it represents only 0·15 per cent. of the total cost of the coal industry to the taxpayer.

Concern and support for this is shown by the large number of Members who recently signed an early-day motion on this subject. Therefore, I strongly urge my hon. Friend the Minister to consider extending retrospectively the concessionary coal allowances to those miners made redundant at the age of 60 in the 1960s. If he will not consider that, will he at least consider some one-off payment, or some benefit to these miners, who have had a raw deal?

11.31 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) has referred to a matter that some of my hon. Friends will recall has been mentioned almost every time that these redundancies and concessionary coal orders have been debated. I find it rather strange that this Johnny-come-lately can join with those of us like my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McGuire) in calling for concessionary coal for those who did not get a square deal under the Tory Government.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Skinner: No, we have not got time. If the hon. Gentleman had been present at some of the coal debates over the past two or three years since he became a Member of Parliament, he would know all about the concern that has consistently been shown by my hon. Friends on this matter, because they represent almost every coalfield in Britain. That is why they signed my early-day motion on the matter.

I have news for the hon. Gentleman, which the Minister will confirm. When I wrote to the Secretary of State for Energy at the back end of last year about this matter for the umpteenth time—the Minister knows that I have raised it with him several times—the Secretary of State replied to the effect that, notwithstanding the new-found concern on the Tory Benches, he would not consider giving the concessionary coal to the pre-1968 people who did not get a square deal under any Government.

Mr. Oppenheim *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: No, I shall not give way. We do not have time, as many of my Friends want to speak on this and many other subjects.

If the hon. Gentleman only knew, he would appreciate that this matter has been raised consistently because some of the miners have done more than 40 years in the pits, and not many of them are left now, because many died. There are widows who should get the coal. It is true that it will cost only about £3 million, and that is why we argue that it should be implemented without any further delay. If the Government can find £2 billion for the farmers in 1984-85, which works out at a massive sum for every farmer in Britain, they could find the money for retired miners' and miner's widows, so that they can have the coal.

I remind the hon. Member for Amber Valley that some of the pits that shut in and around his constituency were not closed under a Labour Government—I happened to be a north Derbyshire miner. Almost without exception, the pits there were closed by the Macmillan Government, about which he spoke.

I want concessionary coal for the people in Blackwell, South Normanton, Pinxton, Tibshelf and all of the other villages in which the pits shut under the pre-1968 agreement. We are dealing with, perhaps, the first Secretary of State who has no influence with the chairman of the National Coal Board. We do not expect the Secretary of State to run the day-to-day administration of the NCB, but the present one is just a lame duck. He cannot get anywhere with the chairman. When the miners group met him recently, he was unable to challenge MacGregor on any of these issues. The Minister has to reply to these questions. Why does he and the Secretary of State not use their muscle? Why do they not use what influence they have with the chairman in his last few months? Why do they not send him packing?

It is remarkable that in Kent we have 47 miners, I believe, who have not been given their jobs back. A considerable proportion of them are branch officials. It is almost as if the NCB wanted to pick new officials for the Kent industry. If Ministers have any influence, they should use it to get some reinstatements in Kent, Yorkshire and Scotland. The BBC's "Open Space" programme tonight told of a branch secretary who went to a tribunal, which found that he should get his job back but, because MacGregor is in the driving seat and says that someone must pay for insubordination, he has still not been given his job back, like many others in Scotland.

In Derbyshire recently a man was supposedly given his job back. He and his mate were then sent along for a medical and he did not pass the hearing test. That is another form of victimisation.

The Secretary of State and the Minister have hardly any influence. That was shown graphically in the case of Bates colliery. The colliery review procedure was sabotaged by the NCB, and the Minister sits there, unable to use any influence despite the fact that, over and over again, the Prime Minister, when she was not dealing in shares in a mining company in Australia, said from the Dispatch Box that that procedure was sacrosanct. My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) who represents NACODS, knows all about sacrosanct procedures and the promises that were made from the Dispatch Box.

The Minister has a chance. My hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) mentioned Kinsley drift. It has not been open long.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Six years.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend says six years. Millions of pounds have been invested in the pit. There is a colliery review tomorrow. There is a picket at Hobart house, starting at 9.30 am. I had better get the advert in. If what happened to Bates happens to Kinsley drift, will the Minister use his influence to ensure that the pit gets a fair crack of the whip? I doubt it. During the strike and since, the Secretary of State and the Minister have not been able to do anything with respect to the chairman of the NCB. The Minister now has a chance to put things right, to show that he has some muscle and to give some hope to those who have been victimised. Some 500 miners are still without a job. It has been agreed in courts and tribunals that many of them have not done anything wrong. Perhaps 200 of them could be given their jobs back in the next few weeks. We would, perhaps, understand that, for the first time, the Minister and his right hon. Friend are beginning to use what power they have. Previous Secretaries of State have used that power and influence. We have seen nothing of it during the course of this Government's reign.

The price of oil has fallen again today. If market forces are left to operate, it could result in a massive further rundown in the mining industry. There could be closures on the same scale as in the 1950s and 1960s when Governments — whatever their political hue — decided that oil was cheap, that it could be obtained from the middle east and elsewhere for ever and that they would supplant the miners by using it. The massive drop in the oil price could mean that a Government who were hell-bent on allowing market forces to operate would allow cheap oil once again to supplant the 300 years' supply of coal which lies beneath the ground of Britain. That would be foolish, because no one can predict that there will not be a quadrupling of oil prices, as happened in 1972 and 1973.

I hope that the Under-Secretary will not listen to the siren voices of the Central Electricity Generating Board, which suggests in code language that it would not be a bad idea to move over to oil because it is cheap. Such a move would mean that more people will be thrown out of work. More miners would have to receive redundancy payments. More miners would be thrown on to the scrap heap and would have to go on the dole, resulting in a loss of tax revenue to the Government, and so on. I want the Under-Secretary of State to declare that the Government will not let market forces operate freely, that they will use coal and will ensure that the mining industry remains intact.

11.41 pm

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was warbling a somewhat false note — a note that he and all hon. Members know to be false. One should note what the hon. Member for Bolsover said during those years when the Wilson Government were closing so many pits, giving no coal concessions and making no allowances. One would have thought that the hon. Gentleman would sing a song crying out for help for the miners, but there was silence from him. He began to sing that song only when the Conservative party came to office, and, even then, he was not singing it too loudly. Last year, there was an hour and a half debate on this subject; this year, it is a three hour debate. Apart from when the hon. Gentleman tried to interrupt other hon. Members, we heard nothing from him on this subject.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): Was he here?

Mr. Ashby: Yes, he was here, but we heard little on this subject until my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) and I tabled an early-day motion on concessionary coal for miners. Three or four days later, the hon. Member for Bolsover came rushing in saying, "I had forgotten about that. Let us get on with it." He then tabled his early-day motion. He is always second best. He does not really care about the miners for whom he says he cares so much.

Productivity has increased and the costs of production have fallen in the coal industry. As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State said, we now have a leaner, fitter and more prosperous industry. The coal orders are almost the swan song of the Government's involvement in the industry. It is nice to realise that the coal industry is about to be able to stand on its own two feet? It will be able to produce its own redundancy schemes. It is becoming a good profitable business. No group can be prouder than the miners of being party to this development. They do not want an industry that is supported up to the neck by the taxpayers. They want a sleek, prosperous industry of which they can be proud.

We have a new mine coming on line in south Leicestershire. Asfordby, a new superpit, will be part of the leaner and more profitable industry. I asked for, and indeed have had, undertakings from the chairman that the people of south Leicestershire will be considered first for jobs in the new pit. They have worked throughout and suffered redundancies, and they will look to the Asfordby pit for the future of their industry. I am grateful that they can look to it for future jobs.

My hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) referred to the early-day motion which I have had the pleasure of signing. When did most of the major redundancies take place, and when were most of the pits closed? We have to look to the years of the Wilson Government, when many pits were closed and redundancy terms were bad. Under the Conservative Government there have been substantial redundancy payments, and coal allowances have increasingly been given to younger people, and men have been able to leave the pits with dignity, having worked there for many years. It is a far cry from the early years.

There is just one anomaly, and it will not cost much to remedy. I hope that a caring Government and the National Coal Board will take action. I refer to the granting of a

[Mr. Ashby]

concessionary coal allowance to all those who would have been entitled to it if they were retiring now. It is not much to ask. The amounts and the numbers are not very large. Advertisements have appeared in my constituency asking those who would be entitled to a coal allowance to contact me so that the numbers can be ascertained. I have received many letters from retired miners, all speaking of the hardship that they have suffered and all asking that the concessionary coal allowance be extended to them. I shall quote from just one of them:

"I am writing on behalf of my husband . . . who is now 74 years old. He is one of the miners you refer to in the local papers. He was made redundant in the late 60s under the Wilson government having been made redundant with a miserly £600 and no coal at the age of 59 years. When he came home and told me what was going to happen I felt very sad as he had several working years left and couldn't get another job and was thrown on the scrapheap. The business of not having the coal allowance hit us very hard . . . for 16 years and had to buy every cobble which does not seem right when a man has worked in the pits for 43 years on the face producing the coal . . . My husband is a Burton man. He trained the Bevin boys and dedicated his life to the miners. We think what was done with the Wilson Government was indeed a very shabby trick, and we vowed we would never vote Labour again, which we haven't."

That is the view of so many of the miners who were made redundant in the 1960s. They feel that they were let down by the Wilson Government — and indeed they were. We, on the other hand, have not let them down. We have supported and looked after them. We should try to make some restitution for the shabby trick that was played upon the coal miners under the Wilson Government. I am asking the Government to adopt a magnanimous approach and to put right the wrong for which the Opposition know they were responsible.

11.50 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) doth protest too much, not in raising the issue—a cause to which he is welcome among the many hon. Members who have sought to deal with the long-standing problem that affects those people who do not benefit from the concessionary coal scheme—but in his zeal in directing his attack specifically at the activities of the Wilson Government, for which there is a reasonable justification. However, his zeal suggested a diversionary tactic away from some of the problems that have arisen during the period of this Government. He slightly lost his sense of perspective about some of the problems that have arisen during the last two years under the current chairman of the National Coal Board. But let us not complain. Instead let us all join in pressing the Minister to take this step, as the alliance has done over a considerable period.

These orders concern the number of people who retire early or who become redundant by accepting voluntary redundancy as a result of the great changes that are taking place in the coal industry. Those changes are very apparent in the Northumberland coalfield. Many people come into these categories, and many of them come into my constituency to work. They accept employment by transfer to two of the only three remaining collieries in the Northumberland coalfield. Two of those collieries are in my constituency. A considerable question mark hangs over the only remaining colliery that lies outside my constituency. Questions have recently been raised about one of the two collieries in my constituency.

One problem, above all others, has caused anger and great anxiety in the Northumberland coalfield and elsewhere in the coal industry in recent weeks — the attitude of the NCB to the colliery review procedure relating to Bates colliery. For the NCB so markedly to have failed the test of this new procedure by its complete refusal to take any notice of it has removed from the Government any credit that was attached to them for placing emphasis on that procedure during the long months of the dispute. If there is to be any respect at all for the procedure, it has to be respected by the NCB. There may come a time when it will be reasonable for the NCB to take issue in detail with a recommendation of the independent review procedure.

I do not think anybody ever claimed that the colliery review procedure had an absolute right always to override the judgment of the NCB, but for the NCB to take no notice of it whatsoever and to dismiss out of hand the recommendations of the review procedure on Bates colliery has completely destroyed any confidence that could be placed in that procedure and has done considerable damage at a time when attempts were being made on all sides to bring about reconciliation and introduce a new atmosphere into the coalfields. The Government must recognise the seriousness of the NCB's actions in this instance.

Another issue that has caused anxiety in the Northumberland coalfield is the future of Whittle colliery. On several occasions the NCB has stated that that colliery is part of its strategy for the area and that it attaches considerable importance to it. Its coal finds a ready sale. It produces the highest quality household coal. When supply difficulties arise at Whittle I am bombarded with complaints from constituents and coal merchants about their inability to get coal from that colliery and about their dissatisfaction with the substitute that they are offered instead. It produces a great deal of constituency correspondence.

There have been geological difficulties at Whittle, as is well known, which have prevented it recently from achieving the very significant improvements in production targets of recent years. The question has been raised by NACODS in recent weeks as to whether a wholly unrealistic target was being set by the NCB for the preparation of a new face at Whittle to enable it to continue profitably in production. I raised this issue with the area director and I have received further assurances about the future of that pit, but I must emphasise to the Minister that anxieties remain. In a letter which I received yesterday the area director said:

"It is precisely because Whittle was part of my Area strategy that I have initiated a special development programme to prepare a replacement coal face. The programme is certainly very demanding, but the organisation and resources are being provided to meet it."

I hope that that means that the work will continue even if whatever initial timetable has been set for it cannot be met.

I do not think that anyone denies the urgency of the work. Certainly nobody who works at the pit wants, in any way, to delay bringing the new face into production. Their future as well as their current earnings depend on it. If Whittle colliery's future were not to be safeguarded the effects on the area of Northumberland around Alnwick and Amble and on many people now coming in from much

further afield in the Ashington and Blyth areas would be disastrous. Whittle is already absorbing men from Bates colliery, as is Ellington.

It is Ellington which remains the prize of the coal industry in the north-east of England and we all depend on its future. The pit has notable achievements to its credit and is now absorbing labour from all parts of the Northumberland coalfield.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) is a neighbour of mine. I think he will recognise that the problems of Whittle colliery and the problem of non-profitability that will arise —I accept the point he has raised—will be covered by the profitability at Ellington and Ashington collieries. That is the way that the National Coal Board ought to organise things. If it is not organising things, each colliery will stand on its own merits. Therefore we may face the problem that Whittle colliery, which employs some people from my constituency, may go under because it has to stand on its own, and not be supported by a neighbouring colliery which is very profitable.

Mr. Beith: It is my belief that in due course Whittle colliery will be able to stand on its own feet and be a profitable colliery. The question is whether it will be carried sufficiently over the period in which the essential work needs to be done. The danger of taking what the hon. Gentleman said to its logical conclusion is that we have had a history in the coal industry of pits being pulled down by the number of other pits they were having to carry. I think that the hon. Gentleman is right to stress that there may be a period, we are going through it now, in which Whittle has to be sustained by the industry to be brought back to profitability, which I am sure can be achieved.

Hanging over all the arguments about profitability is a point mentioned earlier about oil prices. Clearly, that is leading the NCB to pose fresh questions about the profitability of a number of pits. Those of us who are concerned, not just about the coal industry but about the future energy provision of our nation, are bound to record the extraordinary variations wich have occurred in the oil price over the years and the political factors which tend to determine that price. There can be no mistaking the political forces which are at work in the current reductions in the price of oil. We cannot place total reliance on a future of low oil prices.

One of the great advantages this country enjoys is the freedom that its coal supplies give it to have a wide range of energy sources, without firm dependence on any one of them, and not to be impelled to rush into the development of nuclear power at a time when there are so many unanswered questions in that area. Our coalfields give us a considerable advantage and we should not throw that advantage away, least of all on the assumption that the present oil prices will continue to drop and to stay down indefinitely.

11.58 pm

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): I was not intending to say anything at all. However, looking across at the Opposition Benches I do not see any Labour members from Nottinghamshire here to listen and take part in this important debate on the coal industry. This is not the first time that the Benches have been empty of those hon. Members. However, I shall be charitable and say that the right hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Concannon) has been suffering from a car injury which he sustained on his way back from the labour party conference last year.

I was listening closely to my hon. Friend the Minister when he was talking about the future prospects and prosperity of the coal industry. I know that he speaks from fact. He visited Nottinghamshire last week and heard for himself about the record production which is taking place daily. Records are being broken in every pit in that county, not for the first time, but weekly. Thorsby colliery is turning out almost 10 tonnes per man shift. The area director has informed me that next year we shall be producing 18·5 million tonnes of coal from the Nottinghamshire coalfield, at a cost which competes with oil at $15 per barrel. That is the future for coal.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary talked about the redundancy terms that will come to an end on 31 March next year. I know that he hopes that all those who want to participate in the scheme will be able to do so. When my hon. Friend sees the chairman of the NCB, I hope that he will insist that a proper early retirement scheme is in place when the terms come to an end. In my maiden speech in the House I said that 55 would be the right age for miners to retire. That is also the aim of, and has been endorsed by, the Union of Democratic Mineworkers. Therefore, when my hon. Friend sees the chairman, I hope that he will say that when the scheme finishes, a suitable retirement age for miners in the industry should be put in its place.

I remind my hon. Friend that during that unnecessary strike, caused by we all know who, miners in working areas were not able to participate in the scheme because of the need to produce coal. Will those who have not been able to take part be allowed an extension if the NCB finds that time is not on their side?

With those few remarks, I leave it to my hon. Friend to answer my questions when he replies to the debate.

12.1 am

Mr. Michael McGuire (Makerfield): The hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) must not go round deluding himself that it was the Wilson Government, as he kept reminding us, who gave the miners a raw deal. I was a pit secretary as long ago as 1957, when Jimmy Bowman was chairman of the National Coal Board, putting down massive stocks of coal. We started the market forces argument then. Nearly every pit in the constituency that I represent was closed before I came to the House. The miners got sweet nothing. I think £200 was the agreement, and that was under the great Government that the hon. Gentleman was praising.

We can say that we did not do as well for the retired miners as we should, but we shall not listen and take lessons from Conservative Members, telling us what great Conservative Governments did. Real closures took place when I was a pit secretary. The Wigan coalfield closed almost entirely, and we had the job of receiving the miners at our pit.

Hon. Members have referred to the contrast between what men get now and what they got then. There are Members of Parliament here who were working in the mines when I was a pit secretary. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) will remember that there was no pension for men who retired before 1952, and who had worked a lifetime in the pit. That was during the great Conservative Government of Macmillan, to which

[Mr. Michael McGuire]

the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West referred. Those who retired before 1952 did not get a brass farthing in pension, after a lifetime in the industry.

We decided that all working miners should contribute 4d a week for a pension for those who had done a lifetime in the industry. I remember one of the sad, yet joyful, occasions when old men came into the office — the union cabin, as we called it — the tears were blinding them, because they had got a 10 bob pension. But it had to be taken off what was known as the national assistance. Those men took pride in getting that 10 bob, which we paid for. So we have moved on a long way.

I hope that the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West will take a friendly rebuke. He should not tell us the nonsense that the miners got glory when the Tories were in and a rough deal when we were in. They have had a better deal over the years. We could have done more for them.

Tory Members are wrong to rebuke my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover, not that he cannot deal with rebukes from Tories. He can deal with them equally well when he gets them from our side. I have been on these Benches with him many times when together, in debates such as this, we have raised the matter of concessionary coal, and the gap in that concession. I am glad that the Tories are joining in, although it is cold comfort. I hope that they can persuade the Minister, because he is the lad, with the Secretary of State, who can put things right. A Tory has threatened to resign if the Government put a nuclear disposal unit in his constituency. That passion must not go unrewarded. Tories can also say that if concessionary coal is not given, they will resign. That would convince me.

I want to convince the Secretary of State that this scandal has lasted long enough. We are talking about a 10-year qualification when men have worked a lifetime in the industry. That is a scandal. The money involved is little, but the reward to the widows and the few men who are still alive would be great.

All hon. Members, Tory, Labour and Liberal — I must not forget the Liberals — know that to give a widow or an old miner concessionary coal is one of the most rewarding of experiences. Some of these people have been forgotten and left by the wayside.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McGuire: No. I have to sit down soon because colleagues wish to speak.

Some miners are still being sacked. The NCB has been vindictive beyond measure. There is a patchwork across the country. In some areas men who have been convicted of minor offences have had their jobs back, but other men have experienced the heavy hand of vindictiveness and malicious spite and have not got their jobs back.

Anybody understanding my views on the strike will know that I sometimes disputed with my colleagues the efficacy of the strike. But that has gone. I believe that men are being discriminated against, sometimes because they are local union leaders. That is a shame. It is a bigger shame that the Secretary of State and his colleagues have not used their influence. We are not saying that every sacked miner should be given back his job. None of us is foolish enough to say that. But there should be an examination of men who were unfairly, vindictively, sacked and who remain sacked. Until their cases are examined and a sense of fair play prevails, the sore in the mining industry will fester.

The pendulum has swung. The miners' union is almost impotent. It is divided. I shall not go into the reasons. The pendulum will swing back. The miners will not forget the treatment that they received—and they will be right not to forget.

Let us see some movement. This is our strong view. I hope that the Minister will lean on the chap on whom he can lean. Those of us who read the football reports know what happens when the manager is not quite doing his stuff and there is a threat to bring someone else in. In this case that chap is already in on a free transfer from the steel industry. When that happens, it is a question of "On your bike, mate." He should not have got the job, but now he is second in command and another will take over in a couple of months. The Secretary of State and his colleagues should get together with him and say "We want this put right." We are not saying that every sacked miner should regain his job, but we want to see fair play.

During the debate on the colliery review procedure on 5 February 1985, we were told that the miners had no need to fear any question——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is going rather wide of the debate. I am sure that he can relate his remarks to the order.

Mr. McGuire: I am not sure whether you were judicially deaf during an earlier part of the debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the issue of the review was touched upon. I wish to speak only briefly about it in taking up the remarks of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). I believe that the House was misled on 5 February 1985 because of the inference that was to be drawn from what the NCB was publicising at that stage. It was said that no colliery would close merely because the board wanted to close it and that any proposed closure would be the subject of an impartial and independent review. If the board is saying, "If the review leads to a contrary decision to that which we have taken, we shall still go ahead and close the pit," the debate on 5 February 1985 was a farce and the House was misled. We must ensure that there is a proper review procedure and an independent adjudication, and we should abide by the decision of the adjudicating body. I hope that the Minister will get that across to the coal board.

12.12 am

Mr. Roy Mason (Barnsley, Central): Raising the ceiling for redundancy payments in the pits enables us to air our views on job losses, and I shall confine my remarks to that issue. Pits are closing at a faster rate than anyone imagined and redundancies are taking place on a scale which might eventually endanger the industry. This has nothing to do with a pre-arranged hit list.

One major area of concern is the National Coal Board's new accounting procedures, allied with the recommendations of the Waddilove committee's report. Instead of national, or even area, accounting procedures whereby some profitable pits might help keep some marginally unprofitable pits open, two stringent tests apply to each pit. The first test comes from the interest charges on the capital investment at each pit being attributable to that pit. The second test is that the costs of subsidence damage

caused by mining from a pit shall also be added to the pit's costs. That means that a pit that is near a built-up area is penalised to a greater extent on the second test than one in the country.

Redundancies that affect my constituents are being declared at Redbrook colliery near Barnsley. There were 1,189 men working at that pit in April 1985 and only 865 in February 1986, and the work force is to be further reduced to 500. With massive capital investment, both underground and on the surface, high interest charges have to be paid by the pit. As the pit is on the edge of Barnsley, as it were, high subsidence compensation payments have to be paid as well. The alternative is not to work the coal. To avoid subsidence compensation payments, faces have been cut back and redundancies have been declared. In the end, the pit will be lucky to survive.

I have no doubt that it could be proved that what I have described is the result of bad planning on the board's part, that it was a bad investment that led to the loss of millions of pounds and that the accounting procedures are making it difficult for the pit to survive.

Some of my constituents work at Kinsley drift, which is not far from Barnsley. The pit is only six years old. Again, there has been vast investment. I understand that it amounted to £30 million. Kinsley drift became a wonder pit and now it is on the eve of closure. The final appeal goes before the Coal Board tomorrow. Can anyone doubt that another mistake on the part of the Coal Board was made at this pit?

Members of the women's campaign against pit closures came to see me this past weekend. The campaign is based in Barnsley and its members have been demonstrating and campaigning against the closure of Kinsley drift and the effects that that will have on coalfield communities, and rightly so. As I have said, £30 million has been spent and yet the pit is to close after only six years. Who is to blame? What a waste! I have no doubt that there are many similar examples.

The Department of Energy should set up an an independent inquiry team and give it status and power to investigate the past plans and investment schemes at Redbrook, Kinsley drift and other pits in the British coalfields. All that must necessitate a vigorous and detailed examination. The NCB has made major investment mistakes, there have been many unneccessary redundancies and the British taxpayers, the House and the National Union of Mineworkers have a right to know who are the guilty men.

There are now only 135 pits in the country and a labour force of 139,000. In only 11 months—from 30 March 1985 to 1 March 1986—31,637 men have left the industry nearly all of them through redundancies. What is most disturbing is that during that time the NCB imported 12,600,000 tonnes of coal. That tonnage meant 12,000 job losses in the industry. Contracts were no doubt stepped up during the miners' strike, but we do not know for how long they must carry on.

The vast coal imports plus the present fall in oil prices have caused a serious turn of events in the aftermath of the coal strike. Many more redundancies could result and no doubt the CEGB is exploiting the cheap oil and oil-fired power stations are being prepared to come on stream. With cheap coal imports and cheap oil the CEGB has the National Coal Board over a barrel when it comes to negotiations over the annual coal contracts.

The coal industry could be seriously undermined if that situation continues for long. More pits are bound to close under present management policies and through Government indifference. The Secretary of State should step in and, if necessary, use his directive powers to cut coal imports and check the CEGB from switching to oil burning. The rundown of the coal industry has already gone far enough. If it is run down much further, if there is a high rise in oil prices and if shipping freight prices also rise, and then there is a fresh upsurge in the demand for coal, we shall rue the fact that the Minister did not act before it was too late.

The Minister should elaborate on the points that I have raised when he replies to the debate. Will the Minister tell us how many miners have taken voluntary redundancy since the end of the strike? How much has been paid out in lump sums? What is the current annual payment for redundant miners' pensions? Why is there no appeal procedure over redundancy payments? Hon. Members who represent mining constituencies are often approached when there is a difference between a miner and the NCB regarding his payments. Why has no appeal board been established? In view of the numbers involved now, and doubtless that number will rise, why has that board not been established? Finally, the NCB and the Minister have been able to say that all the redundancies have been voluntary and that there have been no compulsory retirements. Will the Minister assure the House and the mineworker's union that that will continue to be the case?

12.17 am

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): I will intervene only briefly in the debate, as other hon. Members wish to speak, but several points have arisen on which I would like to comment.

My first point relates to the question of concessionary coal, but I do not want to go over all the points that have been argued so eloquently on the Floor of the House on that issue already this evening. However, I believe that if the Government could find the relatively small sums of money involved it would do a great deal to put right an injustice that has existed for a long time and would earn much good will for the Government.

I should like to link my first point with a request to my hon. Friend the Minister to consider what further progress has yet to be made in relation to the miners who took redundancy after the strike began and who have lost out on the full benefits to which they reasonably thought they were entitled.

During the debate reference has been made to various industrial tribunal cases and to the NCB's attitude in not taking back miners as a result of the decisions of those tribunals. If the NCB took back miners whom it has dismissed and who it reasonably believed had been guilty of violence and intimidation during the strike, that would make a mockery of the courage of the working miners who stood by the NCB during the strike and would go against the principles for which the Government have fought and for which the country has paid so dearly. The NCB must be satisfied that it has the full support of the House or at least of Conservative Members in making sure that there is no place in the mining industry for the wreckers, the violent and the intimidators.

Finally, let me make a general comment on the future of the coal industry, on which there has already been much comment. Clearly the industry's future and survival must

[Mr. Spencer Batiste]

depend on its being profitable and my hon. Friend's announcement showed that the industry is now close to being able to stand on its own feet, which must be good news and reassuring to all who work in the industry.

Obviously, however, a cloud has been cast by the drop in oil prices and that must reflect upon the targets and profitability of the mining industry. But will my hon. Friend recall that oil prices can go shooting up just as fast as they have come down and all it needs is for the oil sheikhs to meet together and agree on production cuts for oil prices to start rising again. If we have learnt one lesson from the 1970s, it must be that we need an energy policy that ensures not just the profitability of the industries that produce energy, but also certainty of supply, and there can be no better certainty of supply than from coal that is mined in Britain.

For our strategy and our future we need a diverse energy market. We need diverse energy resources, but within that diversity coal must have an important part to play.

12.20 am

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I notice that the right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin) is in the Chamber, and he is a singular reminder of the vagaries of oil prices and markets. Those of us who have a bit of a memory will acknowledge that his stricture during the energy crisis in 1973 was that we should brush our teeth in the dark. We should remember that oil prices have a way not only of going down but of going up fairly rapidly. However, I do not want to discuss energy policy this evening because time does not permit.

The hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) said that the NCB had to face the results of industrial tribunals. I want to put on record the course taken by my constituent, Mr. Robert Young. The Under-Secretary will know that we met him on that matter on 5 March. I am informed that my constituent has had an offer of reinstatement by the NCB. The vagaries of the procedures involved show the degree of vindictiveness and the extent to which the NCB was willing to go—even to offering perjured evidence at a tribunal—in order to deny Mr. Young his democratic rights.

I have reported the matter to the Minister. We know that Mr. Young was charged and fined £75 for a breach of the peace. He was interviewed on 19 August by the colliery manager. He went to an industrial tribunal on 13 January and there the NCB said that it was not contesting unfair dismissal, but was not willing to re-engage Mr. Young because of his behaviour during the interview at Comrie colliery.

As I have told the House previously, my constituent had the presence of mind to tape proceedings. Had he not done so he would have been damned to perpetual unemployment in so far as any chance of being re-engaged or reinstated by the NCB is concerned. I use this example to demonstrate that we in Scotland had 206 victimised, not dismissed, miners. At present, we still have 127 victimised miners. Ten of my constituents are similarly placed as are many more who are not my constituents but who are employed in pits in my area.

The NCB was willing to spend public money defending a case that was indefensible. I want that put on records an illustration of the NCB's mind in Scotland. If the Minister wants to enhance his reputation and that of the coal industry in Scotland, he should take urgent steps to wipe the slate clean. My constituent fears that there is the danger that, having got the offer of reinstatement, he will return to the colliery, Comrie, and find that it is under threat of closure. Those who have knowledge of the mining industry know that if there is no redevelopment, the colliery is almost certain to be scheduled for closure.

The Minister ought to take urgent steps to put the record straight with regard to victimised miners. He ought to give an assurance to the Scottish mining industry that there will be adequate capital development and security of employment for miners in my area and throughout Scotland.

12.25 am

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I wish to raise a constituency problem which is related to the orders that we are discussing tonight. It concerns a group of employees who were formerly employed by the National Coal Board but who are now employed by an engineering company which is a subsidiary of the NCB — the Tredomen Engineering Works at Ystrad Mynach.

I have been chasing the Minister, his predecessor the Secretary of State, the NCB, the area director and the chairman of the NCB to get some satisfaction for hundreds of miners who have been made redundant due to the decline of the coal industry, and many of whom have been denied payment from the redundant mineworkers payments scheme even though they are entitled to payment from the mineworkers pension scheme. In 1983 I asked the Minister's predecessor whether he would consider making provision for the payment of the RMPS to employees of Tredomen. In reply, he said that Tredomen, though a wholly-owned subsidiary of the National Coal Board, was a limited company engaged in the manufacture of specialised mining equipment not only for the board but for other organisations, and that it was not the kind of establishment providing services ancillary to collieries for which the RMPS was designed. The Minister said that the answer was no for three reasons: first, that the company was a wholly-owned subsidiary of the NCB and it was a limited company; secondly, that the company did not manufacture exclusively for the board and, thirdly, that it was not the type of establishment for which the RMPS was designed. Yet on page 14 of these orders it is made clear that the orders apply to people employed not only directly by the board but by its subsidiaries.

I have confirmation from Mr. Ian MacGregor, the chairman of the NCB, that for the past eight years the Tredomen Engineering Company did between 95 and 98 per cent. of its work directly for the NCB. If that is not working exclusively for the NCB, I do not know what is.

Payments can be made from the RMPS to people who are employed in estate and house maintenance depots, in headquarters and regional offices and establishments, civil engineering depots and workshops. They are covered by appendix 1 on page 45 of the order. In 1973 the Tredomen employees, employed directly by the NCB, were told in a letter that their conditions of employment would be protected on the transfer of their employment from the NCB. If all the other categories of people can receive payment from the RMPS, the workers facing redundancy from Tredomen should be entitled to receive it. I ask the Minister to consider this matter. I am awaiting a detailed reply on these specific points.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I support what my right hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) said about Redbrook. Investment in collieries ought to be examined. There is such a long lead-in time that it is totally unfair to load the cost on one colliery. The investment period in Redbrook started about 15 years ago when plants in the Barnsley area were designated for alteration and rejuvenation. It is entirely wrong to load on to the 450 men in one colliery the capital costs of what would be sustained by at least 1,500 men.

I should like to ask about people who do not receive unemployment benefit. People who go in for the business scheme are normally allowed up to £40 per week from the Department of Employment to help them with ideas for creating a small business. The £40 depends upon the receipt of unemployment pay. My workers are not in receipt of unemployment benefit and when they apply to be considered under the small business scheme they are turned down. I have written to the Under-Secretary in the Department of Employment, and perhaps the Minister will take up the matter on an interdepartmental basis to see whether he can get rid of what is clearly an anomaly.

12.30 am

Mr. David Hunt: I say to my hon. Friends the Members for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim), Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby), Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) and Elmet (Mr. Batiste), and to the hon. Members for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie), Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), and Makerfield (Mr. McGuire), the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason), and the hon. Members for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) that I do not have sufficient time tonight to deal adequately with the points they raised, but I shall write to them, just as I shall respond to those hon. Members who have not caught your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about any points they raise with me in correspondence.

My hon. Friends the Members for Elmet, Sherwood and Leicestershire, North-West spoke about the announcement I made of the ending of the scheme. When the scheme was introduced the then Minister for Power, Mr. Richard Marsh, made it clear that it was a temporary scheme to provide a breathing space. On 5 December 1967, Mr. Marsh said:

"Therefore, the purpose of the Bill is to give the industry a breathing space to help it to get the level of productivity to enable it to compete with other industries." — [*Official Report*, 5 December 1967; Vol. 755, c. 1269.]

We have seen a marvellous breakthrough in productivity. There is a new pride in the industry. I found that last week when I went underground at Bilsthorpe with my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood. As he constantly reminds the House, as do my other hon. Friends, the industry must never forget the debt it owes to the courage and determination of working miners. I am sure I shall find the same pride when I go underground with my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West at Donisthorpe this week as I found at Point of Ayr, Monkton Hall, Ellington, Wearmouth, Wistow, Lady Windsor Abercynon, and other collieries I have visited since the end of the strike.

Productivity records have been broken week after week as miners fight to achieve the viable competitive industry that is the only sure way to secure their jobs in the long term. I say to my hon. Friends who raised with me the matter of concessionary coal that I fully understand the strength of feeling that exists on this issue and the disappointment felt by mineworkers who, when they were working contributed to coal pools, but under the rules of the schemes to which they have contributed have no entitlement following redundancy. I listened carefully to my hon. Friends in the debate and also to what they said to me prior to this debate, but I fear that against the background of the industry and the decision of successive Governments, I will be able only to reach the conclusion of previous reviews: that further extensions to existing arrangements would not be justified.—

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business).*

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Redundant Mineworkers and Concessionary Coal (Payments Schemes) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 10th March, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft Coal Industry (Limit on Payments in respect of Redundant Mineworkers) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 10th March, be approved.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments &c.).

BROADCASTING

That the draft Broadcasting (Local Sound Broadcast Programme Contractors' Additional Payments) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 4th March, be approved.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

HARBOUR, DOCKS, PIERS AND FERRIES

That the draft Ports (Finance) Act 1985 (Increase of Grants Limit) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 7th March, be approved.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 80(5) (Standing Committees on European Community documents).

POWERED INDUSTRIAL TRUCKS

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 6893/79, a proposal for a Council Directive on the approximation of the laws of the member states relating to self-propelled industrial trucks and of the supplementary explanatory memorandum for the Department of Trade and Industry dated 28th November 1985 and 17th February 1986; and accepts the need substantially to reduce current non-tariff barriers to the exports of United Kingdom-based manufacturers whilst ensuring a satisfactory level of health and safety protection.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Sunday Trading

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): I beg leave to present a petition to the House on behalf of 1,500 of my

[Mr. Tom Sackville]

constituents. It reflects their deep conviction that Sunday has special characteristics as a day of rest, recreation and worship for the benefit of family and community life. They believe that the current legislation before Parliament allowing for unlimited trading on Sunday will diminish those characteristics of Sunday.

To lie upon the Table.

English Estates

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

12.34 am

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): I am grateful for the chance to instigate a short debate about English Industrial Estates Corporation, called English Estates. It is one of England's biggest developers and is certainly one of England's largest high-tech developers. That may not be as well known as it should be in the House, but it is known to us in the north-east, because over two thirds of its developing industrial footage lies in the northern region, just as its headquarters do. It is appropriate that a north-east Member should be sponsoring a debate about English Estates and allowing us the opportunity to explore with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary the role of English Estates nationally and its particular importance for a region such as the north-east.

This is also a timely debate, because last week my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was able to announce a substantial increase in the funding for English Estates over and above that which was originally feared. It was originally suggested that some £25 million might be available for that year, and for each of the next three years. My right hon. Friend has been able to ensure spending, although perhaps not funding, of some £32 million. That is a modest increase on this year's £30·5 million. It will help English Estates to carry forward the programme that it envisaged last year, and to finance continuing development in the north-east, especially in the counties of Durham and Cleveland. I understand that that forward programming will include a substantial development in Darlington, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary may be able to say something about that.

I welcome the increase in funding and the restoration of what was originally threatened to be a substantial cut. I particularly welcome the pledge that was originally given on 25 May 1984, that the provision made in English Estate's budget for the development at Chatham and the west would not affect its programmes and commitments in our assisted areas. There has been good news about funding and I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will be able to confirm that.

Another important aspect for English Estates, in securing the medium-term future, is the corporation's management. I was a little disappointed that the efforts to put together a management-led buy-out last August now appears to have floundered. There would have been considerable advantages for the Government, in both the capital receipts that would have accrued from such a buy-out, and the knowledge that Government programmes would still have been commissioned and carried forward by English Estates, as a private company.

There would also have been advantages to English Estates. It would have been able to set slightly longer-term objectives than the Government are often able to set for it. It might have been able to move towards a more broadly based and developed company, free of some of the constraints that Government and Treasury, of necessity, impose on such a public body. It would also have been free from the public expenditure survey committee lobbying and so on.

The company might also have been able to replace some of the more strict terms laid down by Whitehall for

the pay and conditions of staff, with a more commercial and realistic set of incentives and awards based on performance. Although that has not happened, I hope that the moves towards improved management will not be relaxed, and that initiatives such as the northern subsidiary of English Estates will be pursued. I also hope that on pay and reward for staff, the Treasury might be persuaded, once it has resolved the small matter of the English Estates report and accounts for last year, to adopt in turn a more flexible approach.

Another aspect which is relevant to the future of English Estates is the decision which will soon be made to end the three development corporations in the north-east — Aycliffe, Peterlee and Washington. Their life was extended again by the Government to 31 March 1988, which is less than two years away. I do not believe that there is any realistic prospect of a further extension being granted, even if we were in favour of it.

It is appropriate for the Government to consider soon the bodies that are best suited to take over, not simply the physical estates of those three new town corporations but their role in attracting inward investment and in making the localities more attractive places for development and industrial growth.

I realise that this is not entirely a matter for my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and that his Department has to have consultations with another Department about it. I submit that English Estates, properly organised, is the best body to take on the development corporations' role. It is already based in the north-east. I believe that it could happily pool the estates of the development corporations with its own industrial estate to form a larger industrial portfolio. It might be able to sell the attractions of the north-east to a wider market, internationally and nationally, it might be able to retain some of the skills and expertise of the existing development corporations. It would certainly be able to ease the transition period by taking over an increasing part of the management of the estates.

Assisted areas, such as the north-west and the north-east, are crucial to the role of English Estates. I am not denigrating the developments undertaken at Chatham and in the west midlands. I understand the reasons for the involvement of English Estates in those areas. However, I believe that the greater challenge lies in the north of Britain, especially in the north-east, because that is where the greater development potential lies. In the north-east we have perhaps the greatest potential of any English region for further and future development. We have the space which the modern company needs. We have an abundance of attractively priced land and housing. We have the attractive countryside, which the modern company likes to have around it. Too much of that land lies undeveloped.

The register of publicly owned land, which was set up by the Government in 1980, reveals that a huge number of acres in public ownership are unused, undeveloped and awaiting development. There are more than 4,000 acres in Tyne and Wear, nearly 4,000 acres in Cleveland, nearly 3,000 acres in the county of Durham and nearly 2,000 acres in Northumbria—a total of just under 13,000 acres of publicly owned land—ripe for development but sat on by local councils. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State may wish to consider when local councils are not prepared to develop land or to let other people have the chance to develop it whether the Government, instead of ordering the land to be sold, should invite English Estates to develop some of it.

In the north-east we have not only space but resources. There are the natural resources of energy, water, offshore gas and coal. There are also the human resources—the skills in engineering which have been transformed into skills in the new technologies and the biotechnologies. It is often forgotten that 16,800 people work in the north-east in electronics and another 5,000 work in pharmaceuticals.

There is a fear in the region that we lose out to the south-east in high technology and new technology development and that too much applied research is heavily concentrated in the south. A recent survey shows that plants in the south-east have an average of 24 people employed directly in research and development. An equivalent plant in the north-east has only nine. The region has a lower record of product innovation. Those are all reasons why the role of high-tech development and the development of high-tech sites is pivotal to the future attractiveness of the north-east. That is why I believe that a successful English Estate, with its management given more freedom and its funding put on a surer footing, working increasingly in partnership with the local authorities and with the new towns as they come to the end of their natural life, is one of the keys that could unlock the door to a new and more prosperous north-east.

12.40 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) for his timely observations this evening, not least because the moment is approaching when we will be able to confirm, as a result of his inquiries, the decision that we can make regarding his constituency, but also because it is right to give a full airing to the undoubted benefits and advantages of industry and commerce building up their operations in the north-east. The undoubted advantages of Northumberland and Durham in particular are well worth restating at this juncture in our deliberations on English Estates.

Factory building has been an intrinsic part of successive Governments' regional policies for the past 50 years. Indeed, in the mid-1930s it was virtually the first and only form of regional assistance. Since that time a wide range of intiatives has been developed to encourage firms to set up, relocate or expand in the depressed areas of the United Kingdom. Over this time the factory building programme has evolved as an essential instrument of those policies, both complementing other measures and operating in its own right as an effective means of attracting employment to specific locations within the assisted areas.

Our policy on English Estates, and its recent record, represents an outstanding success for the Government. That is my third reason for welcoming my hon. Friend's speech.

On taking office in 1979, the Government came to the conclusion that measures intended to encourage business to set up, locate or expand in the assisted areas would not succeed if firms could not find suitable factories, workshops and offices. We asked ourselves if the private sector could be relied on to provide all the factories and industrial premises that would be needed in the assisted areas to ensure the success of our regional policies—a job it appeared to be doing quite adequately in the rest of

[Mr. John Butcher]

the country. Unfortunately, it could not. Some of the investment appeared to be too high-risk and to offer too low a rate of return to attract the large amount of institutional investment needed to ensure the adequate provision of suitable premises.

Finally, we asked ourselves whether English Estates was doing the best possible job in providing these premises. I am afraid the answer to this final question was a definite no. Civil servants in Whitehall and in the region had been telling English Estates what type of property to develop and where to develop it, selected the occupants and told English Estates what rents to charge. The consequences of their decisions are still plain to see—large, echoing, empty factory sheds that provided impressive evidence of the previous Government's concern for the regions when they were being constructed, but which have stood empty since then and demonstrated that concern is not enough. The factories stand as mute evidence to a failed policy of building monuments to the past rather than workshops for the future. In order to turn equal concern for the problems of these areas into economic regeneration, it was necessary to understand industry and commerce's basic requirements for new premises. This could be done only by those versed in the disciplines of the market place.

We quickly concluded that, although it was necessary to continue the advance factory programme, it was a job for property development experts and not for civil servants to carry this programme through. We therefore strengthened the board and management of English Estates with real experts in property development, and gave it financial and commercial objectives and broad policy guidelines to which to work. It was told by us to operate in the assisted areas, building factories where there was an underlying need in the market, but only in those locations where there was no prospect of finding private sector investors to undertake the development. We told it to concentrate on the type of development that would provide the most employment and bring a better balance to local economies. It was told to sell off the property as soon as it could, either to the tenants or to private investors. It was also told to secure the maximum rent that it could, without actually turning tenants away from factories that would otherwise stand empty.

With these objectives in view, English Estates was told to plan, develop, market and manage the development programme, while exercising its best commercial judgment. The many civil servant posts previously required for this work were saved and English Estates took it on with no overall increase in its staffing level.

The policy has proved to be an outstanding success. The new team at English Estates quickly identified an underlying demand for small units; many businesses in the assisted areas could not set up or expand because there was simply nowhere for them to carry on a business. English Estates pioneered the development of small factory units and the special rental terms and management techniques necessary to attract and nurture small business tenants.

English Estates now manages over 3,000 small units and many hundreds of companies owe their existence to these English Estates developments. These companies have their roots in the assisted areas and as they grow, as many will, they will provide an increasing number of jobs firmly based in the areas where they were born. I know that my hon. Friend is most anxious that this point should be borne in mind. Growing mighty oaks from the little acorns may be a slow business, but it stands more chance of success in the longer term than attempting to transplant mighty oaks into an alien soil.

Under the old policies, English Estates was restricted to building premises for manufacturing industries. Its estates grew up without the mix of warehousing and offices that is so essential for balanced economic development at the local level. Under the Conservatives it has built warehousing and developed small suites of offices as well as factories. It has found institutional investment, up to £20 million so far, to help finance some of these developments. These units have found a ready market for businesses in the service sector that are anxious to service the manufacturing industries on the industrial estates. As a consequence, the estates are becoming more desirable locations for thriving modern industries.

Perhaps the most innovative developments of all have been those in response to this Government's policies of encouraging the interaction beween higher educational establishments and businesses engaged in the new technologies. English Estates is now the largest single high-tech developer in the country. Its technology transfer centres on university campuses provide a model which private developers have followed in the more prosperous parts of the country. At Bradford university, for example, it has provided one of the most successful high-tech developments in the United Kingdom. Similar developments have now been completed at Leeds, Hull, York and at Durham, and more are planned.

By means of this type of development, English Estates has provided a focus in the assisted areas for growth and prosperity in the industries of the future.

The policy of selling factories at every possible opportunity and getting the best rents we could from the market has paid off handsomely. As a result, English Estates returns to the Government nearly £2 from rents and factory sales for every £3 which the taxpayer invests in its programmes.

The success of the policy is demonstrated by the speed with which English Estates has filled its new units. Every one of the past five years has seen a record number of new factories occupied. The area of vacant factory space is now about half of what it was five years ago. In the north-east of England, lettings have shown a particularly encouraging trend. Not only is English Estates letting a record number of factories to new tenants there but over the past year a record number of existing tenants have expanded, creating more jobs in the process.

All this has been achieved by English Estates while operating under a hitherto bureaucratic financing system which completely divorced its commercial performance from the size and content of its development programme. The Industrial Development Act 1985 was introduced to correct this and provides the basis for a more commercial funding system. From 1 April this year English Estates will be able to use its income from rents and factory sales to fund its capital investment. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced to the House on 19 March how these new arrangements would work in practice.

As for the actual size of the programme, over the past four years we have provided an average of £32 million grant-in-aid for English Estates to invest in new factory development in the assisted areas and in recent years in Chatham. In return, English Estates has surrendered about

£22 million in receipts from rents and factory sales in each of these years. On this basis, the net funding has averaged some £10 million a year. This year, English Estates will spend £31·7 million on capital investment, including about £2 million on the development in Chatham.

Next year, English Estates will spend at least £32 million on new investment but all of that will now go into the assisted areas. We have agreed to provide £12·6 million grant-in-aid towards that investment. Quite separate financing arrangements have been agreed for the development at Chatham, which will no longer effect the size of the programme that English Estates can carry out in the assisted areas. If English Estates matches its recent performance on factory sales and rents—and we have every reason to believe that it will in fact do better than that—more money should be available for it to build up a reserve for future years or to spend on more capital investment. We have high hopes that an even higher proportion of future investment will be funded from its own resources.

As for the £32 million to be spent in the assisted areas, the actual allocation to various locations within them is a matter for English Estates. It will allocate those funds to the travel-to-work areas in the assisted areas taking account of the level of unemployment in each. Those allocations have yet to be worked out, but, I am delighted to report to my hon. Friend that English Estates now has sufficient funds to undertake a £1 million development in Darlington shortly. English Estates is about to discuss with local interests how best to invest this sum to maximise job creation there.

We shall, of course, continue our policy of asking the board and management of English Estates to use their development expertise and management skills to provide the type of development that is best suited to the needs of each location in terms of generating the most jobs for the money. English Estates is now in a position to reopen negotiations and discussions with interested bodies, including the local authorities in the assisted areas, concerning the type of development that it will be undertaking in the years ahead.

It is no secret that we have discussed with the management of English Estates whether we should now go the full way and privatise its organisation. But we have come to the conclusion that the present system, with English Estates implementing our policies through the disciplines of the market place, will continue to provide the most responsive and cost-effective means of carrying out the advance factory programme.

I opened by saying that I had a success story to tell, and I would like to close by saying that we hope for even greater success under a more commercial and market-orientated system in the future. All that has been made possible by the dedication and professional expertise of the board, management and staff of English Estates.

I should like to conclude by saying that I have listened carefully to what my hon. Friend said about the future of the three development corporations and I shall, as he invited me, refer his remarks tomorrow to my colleagues at the Department of the Environment, who will, no doubt, be getting in touch shortly in response to my hon. Friend's question.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 25 March 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ISLE OF WIGHT BILL

Amendments agreed to.
To be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SERVICES

Prescription Charges

1. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost of a prescription in August 1979; and what has been the percentage increase since then, taking account of his statement to the House of 10 March.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): If the hon. Gentleman is referring to the prescription charge, the charge in August 1979 was 45p, and the prescription charge in 1986-87 will be 389 per cent. higher.

Mr. Hamilton: I remind the right hon. Gentleman that since 1979 prescription charges have risen by 1,000 per cent. Need I remind him that many of the 25 per cent. who have to pay the full prescription price are on earnings only a shade above supplementary benefit level or family income supplement? In many instances people are paying not just for one prescription but for two or three. That is bound to have an adverse effect on good health. What does the Minister intend to do about it?

Mr. Hayhoe: Seventy-five per cent. of prescriptions are fully exempt and about 5 per cent., of those who require regular medication, are covered by season tickets. Less than one prescription in five attracts the full charge. The hon. Gentleman was being over-selective in suggesting that all those people are just above the limit below which they would be exempt.

Mr. Galley: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the present system is nonsense? Seventy-five per cent. of the population pay no prescription charges, and whether or not payment is made bears no relation to income. If people are exempted for a particular disease, that exemption takes into account all their prescriptions. Will my right hon. Friend agree to review the whole system in the near future?

Mr. Hayhoe: The British Medical Association has recently written to me suggesting that there should be a general review. My officials will be meeting representatives of the BMA fairly soon. Certain pledges have been made about prescription and other charges; and, of course, I do not resile from those pledges.

Mr. Kirkwood: If the Minister undertakes the review, will he give urgent attention to one of the consequences of the elevenfold increase, namely, that the cost of prescriptions to the patient is more than the cost to the National Health Service? It is scandalous that nearly one third — 20 million — of the 64 million prescriptions issued cost the Government less than is charged for them.

Mr. Hayhoe: The average cost of prescriptions is somewhat over double the prescription charge; but of course within that average some will cost much more than double and others, as the hon. Gentleman has suggested, will cost less than is charged.

Parallel Drug Imports

2. **Mr. Michael Morris** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he is proposing to take to stop unlicensed parallel drug imports.

Mr. Hayhoe: All such allegations are investigated fully. My Department is currently prosecuting two companies for alleged offences involving parallel imports. It is considering other cases where criminal proceedings will be taken if the evidence warrants this. Wholesale dealers have recently been warned that they also risk losing their licences if they market unlicensed medicinal products. Lists of parallel imported products which have been granted licences have been issued to help pharmacists identify products offered to them.

Mr. Morris: That is a reasonable beginning. Is my right hon. Friend aware that the number of scrips at present met by parallel imports is about 7 per cent.? The cost to the nation is just over £100 million and there is a loss to the Exchequer of about £30 million or £40 million in terms of remuneration to pharmacists, tax, and so on. Is he further aware that although only two companies have been prosecuted there is clear evidence that tens of companies are slapping labels on to certain products and producing other products of different colours and shapes? Should not more urgent action be taken by the Department to deal with this matter?

Mr. Hayhoe: If my hon. Friend has evidence, I hope that he will let my Department have it, and I hope that those who advise and give information to him about these matters will do likewise. My hon. Friend will realise that what was called the high discount scheme that was introduced by my predecessor was challenged and declared to be contrary to European law. My officials and I are urgently considering what further action may be possible to recover excessive discounts.

Sir Dudley Smith: Is my right hon. Friend aware that although he rightly demands the highest quality for the production and labelling of British medicines, he does not appear to be doing the same for foreign, imported products? Why not?.

Mr. Hayhoe: My hon. Friend is wrong to suggest that there is a reduction in the requirements relating to labelling and quality. I repeat that anybody who markets an imported, unlicensed medicine may be liable to prosecution for committing an offence under the Medicines Act 1985.

Social Security Reform

3. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the future role of the voluntary sector following the publication of the Green Paper and the White Paper on the reform of social security; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): A number of voluntary organisations have written in about how the Green and White Paper proposals will affect them. Some have subsequently discussed their views with me and other Ministers.

Mr. Colvin: What role does my hon. Friend envisage for the voluntary sector in a reformed welfare state, particularly in the light of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's recent Budget recommendations on changes in the tax regime for voluntary charitable giving?

Mr. Newton: I expect that the measures that were announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which I very much welcome, will enable the voluntary organisations to play an even more important part in the general welfare of the community than they already play. It is a contribution which in its own humble way the Department of Health and Social Security will seek to promote by its grants and policies.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Minister confirm that as part of this change the Government do not intend to transfer any statutory responsibility from either the social services or the health services to the voluntary sector?

Mr. Newton: There is no proposal to transfer responsibilities between the sectors. The hon. Gentleman knows that one of our major aims is to promote partnership between the two, because we believe that that is the best way to meet the needs of many people.

Mr. Stern: Is my hon. Friend aware that local authorities in certain areas are using Government policies, such as care in the community, to reduce the role of the voluntary sector? Will he issue guidance in areas where there have been major changes in social policy to encourage existing voluntary groups and new voluntary groups to take a full part?

Mr. Newton: We shall do everything that we can to ensure the success of the partnership to which I have referred. Experience differs from one local authority to another. Alongside those to which my hon. Friend has referred are others which are accused of trying to push more on to the voluntary sector. A proper partnership remains the right answer.

Mr. Meacher: Does it not say a good deal about this Government's policies that a week ago a Tory Budget yet again gave away major tax concessions to the rich by abolishing the tax even on major lifetime gifts and by further big tax cuts for directors on £30,000 a year, but that at the same time the Social Security Bill will cut the benefit of 2,500 very severely disabled people by no less than £60 a week and also, by major changes to the disregards, will cut the income of voluntary support workers and of those who care for them? Is it not absolutely and abundantly clear that social security reform under this Government is simply a fig leaf for redistribution from the poor to the rich?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman is increasingly stuck in a very boring groove. He knows quite well that the illustrative figures published with the White Paper show that the overwhelming majority of the least well-off disabled people will gain substantially.

Health Education Officers

4. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further action he proposes to take on the report "The Recruitment, Training and Development of Health Education Officers".

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): The report was reconsidered last year under the aegis of the National Health Service Training Authority, and new arrangements to oversee the training of health education officers are now being examined by the authority, the Health Education Council and the Department.

Mr. Dormand: I recognise the fine work that is done by the Health Education Council, but does the Minister agree that health education officers play a crucial role? Will the Minister clarify what he said? Does he mean that the Kirby committee will be reconvened? If not, will he consider reconvening that committee, because so much remains to be done with regard to the recruitment, training and development of health education officers? I hope that that will be done soon.

Mr. Whitney: I am happy to reaffirm that the Department recognises the necessary role of health education officers. I assure the hon. Gentleman that progress to improve the training of these officers is going apace.

Mr. Kennedy: I am an ashamed smoker who is still trying to give up, but failing abysmally. In view of the announcements that were made yesterday by the Department about the extra action to be taken against the promotion of cigarette smoking, I put it to the Minister that the balance between the funds that the Health Education Council enjoys and the amounts that the tobacco companies can spend on advertising should be substantially redressed. If that is not done the Department's action will be no more than a cosmetic exercise. Will the Minister take steps to redress that balance?

Mr. Whitney: Our record on reducing smoking is good. This subject will be covered by later questions on the Order Paper.

Mr. Key: Does my hon. Friend agree that the role of the Health Education Council must extend into areas of drug and substance abuse? Action should start with young children of primary school age. Does he accept that it is time we stopped the idea that by telling people about drugs we shall enhance their interest in them? Finally, does my hon. Friend agree that we must achieve a completely different attitude in young people from primary school age?

Mr. Whitney: Both the Health Education Council and the Department are active in this area. I commend to my hon. Friend the excellent videos, for use in schools, which we released some weeks ago.

Orthopaedic Operations

5. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average length of time patients have to wait for orthopaedic operations.

Mr. Hayhoe: In 1983 the estimated median interval between placement on a waiting list and admission for orthopaedic surgery was 13 weeks.

Dr. Marek: Is the Minister aware that, for example, in the West Surrey and North-East Hampshire district health authority — the figures are not untypical — the waiting list for orthopaedic operations in December 1983 was 1,027 and in 1985 it was 1,350? That is an increase of 30 per cent. Is he further aware that the waiting time in that district health authority is four to five years? Therefore, does the Minister agree that his figures are fiddled and gerrymandered in the same way as the figures that his Department produced about the so-called growth in the Health Service? The National Health Service, far from being safe in his hands, is dust and ashes in them. It is a disgraceful situation. What does the Minister intend to do about it?

Mr. Hayhoe: It is clear that the hon. Gentleman has been carefully selective in his choice of figures, which may or may not be accurate. Between 1978 and 1984, in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty, there have been 75,000 extra cases coming forward—an increase of 17 per cent. The waiting lists, despite that increased load, have remained the same. Perhaps the most important aspect is that the waiting lists for urgent treatment have come down by 14 per cent. compared with the position under the Labour Government.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: Does my right hon. Friend think that the private sector can assist in reducing waiting lists, and to what extent is it used to do that?

Mr. Hayhoe: Health authorities have freedom to make arrangements with the private sector if it makes cost-effective sense to do so. I know that that has been done to advantage in particular areas.

Dr. Roger Thomas: What progress is being made in improving the orthopaedic consultant-registrar proportion, as recommended by the Select Committee three years ago? Has progress been retarded by the new, more stringent rules regarding immigrant doctors staying in this country?

Mr. Hayhoe: The new and, as the hon. Gentleman said, more stringent rules that apply to immigrant doctors in the NHS are being warmly welcomed as making a positive contribution to solving the long-standing problem of medical manpower. I am consulting the professions on these issues. I hope that we shall make real progress in resolving what has been a long-standing problem.

Mrs. Currie: Is my right hon. Friend aware that some of my constituents in South Derbyshire have been worried by the recent statements of orthopaedic surgeons working at the local hospital in Burton-on-Trent? May I convey to my right hon. Friend the fact that the surgeons are saying that orthopaedic posts cannot be filled in our local hospital because of the Government's ruling on overseas doctors, that money is available and posts exist, but that the home-grown version will not come to our part of the world? Does he agree that that is absolute nonsense, and will he look into the matter?

Mr. Hayhoe: I am not aware of the position to which my hon. Friend refers. My superficial reaction is that that does not make sense, because those restrictions do not apply at present, but they will apply some time in future.

Mr. Pavitt: Is the Minister aware that at a hospital not far from the Chamber the waiting list for a hip replacement operation is 5¼ years? Is he further aware that the rationalisation of acute beds in district general hospitals meant that last week a teaching hospital telephoned 13 hospitals to take an emergency case, and that only the fourteenth had a bed available? This is a crisis. Will the Minister do something about it?

Mr. Hayhoe: I am well aware that compared with the position under the Labour Government — *[Interruption.]* I realise that the Labour party does not like these comparisons being made, but it ill befits it to criticise us when its performance was so much worse. There has been an increase of about 33 per cent in the number of hip replacement operations being carried out, and the average or median waiting time for that operation is the same now as it was then, despite the significant increase in the numbers being operated upon.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Is it not misleading to refer to the average waiting time for orthopaedic operations when some are so minor that waiting is no hardship, while others are so painful that treatment is urgently required? Is it not true that to have an average covering those two categories is wholly misleading?

Mr. Hayhoe: I was giving not averages but medians. *[Laughter.]* With my engineering background I like to be precise about these matters. The figure that I gave meant that 50 per cent. of people were waiting fewer than 13 weeks and 50 per cent. were waiting longer. That accurately reflects the queues waiting for operations. My hon. Friend is right, and that is why I said that the number of urgent cases on the waiting list had been reduced by 14 per cent. compared with the figure when we came to power in May 1979.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is not one aspect of the problem that the more glamorous, hi-tech operations command a higher proportion of the available resources than their prognosis would warrant—for example, compared with hip replacement operations? What is happening to the idea of a medical audit which would examine the relative prognoses of such operations? Will the Minister ensure that hip replacement operations, which give people much greater activity and pleasure, are carried out, as the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) said earlier, without the huge waiting lists that exist in my area, as much as in the hon. Gentleman's area?

Mr. Hayhoe: I said that the number of hip replacements had increased significantly since the party that the hon. Gentleman supported in the Division Lobbies and sustained in office was in power. Having said that, of course the hon. Gentleman is right to raise the wider question. The whole of the medical profession ought to be looking at that question so that a proper balanced judgment can be made. It is certainly not for politicians to impose judgments upon the professions in that area.

Diabetics

6. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has had any representations recently from or on behalf of diabetics about the provision of medical services to them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The Department is in frequent contact with the British Diabetic Association about its concerns.

Mr. Hirst: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his short reply. Amid all the controversy about whether needles should be made available to drug addicts to prevent the spread of disease, is he aware of the continuing concern of diabetics that disposable syringes and blood glucose monitoring equipment remain unavailable on prescription? As the parent of a young diabetic daughter, may I remind my hon. Friend of the difficulties that a young child has in learning how to inject herself with the large glass syringe supplied by the National Health Service? Can he offer any hope of a relaxation of the prescription availability rules?

Mr. Whitney: We are well aware of the points that my hon. Friend has made. If either of those services is clinically necessary, it is available through the hospital service. However, we are sympathetically considering whether GPs might be able to prescribe home blood glucose tests. Of course, that has important resource implications which must be balanced against other demands on the National Health Service.

Mr. Carter-Jones: Does that mean that the Minister is consenting to ambulatory automatic delivery of insulin to diabetics? Will there be better treatment for the blind diabetic?

Mr. Whitney: I cannot go beyond what I have said. We are considering extremely carefully the improvement of the service, but, where it is clinically necessary, such services are available through the hospital service.

Mr. Robert Atkins: I endorse the request made by my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst). As the parent of a diabetic child, I know at first hand the problems that are involved. For example, a young child, particularly a girl, can be bruised most severely by using a usable as opposed to a reusable syringe. To that extent, will my hon. Friend give what attention he can to considering the point that I have raised as a matter of urgency?

Mr. Whitney: Yes, I certainly will. However, where it is clinically necessary, that provision is still available through the hospital service and my hon. Friend may wish to consider that in his own case.

Disabled Persons (Services Consultation and Representation) Bill

7. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, following his consultation exercise on the Disabled Persons (Services Consultation and Representation) Bill, the Government will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards its enactment.

Mr. Hayhoe: I made the Government's attitude clear on Second Reading. The Government are still considering the responses to the consultation paper issued last month. I hope to be able to announce our conclusions shortly.

Mr. Clarke: *Is the Minister* aware that the views that he expressed on Second Reading have found no support? Does he accept that proper assessments and crisis prevention actually save money, apart from being socially desirable? Most important of all, now that he knows that the response to the Government's document was overwhelmingly in favour of every clause in the Bill, will he accept that finding and refuse to dilute it?

Mr. Hayhoe: I know that the consultations have shown that the resource implications of the Bill and of the proposed amendments to the Bill are considerable. I suggested that that was the case when I spoke on Second Reading.

Mr. Hannam: If my right hon. Friend is facing severe resource limitations in connection with this very worthwhile Bill, will he consider a phased programme of introduction of some of the key provisions of the Bill, especially those affecting the assessment and representation of disabled people?

Mr. Hayhoe: That point has been put to me during the consultation period. As I have said, the Government are considering the responses that were given during that period.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Does the Minister recall that, perhaps because of, rather than in spite of, his speech the Bill received an unopposed Second Reading? Is he aware that throughout the country there is massive support for the Bill? Why will the Government not accept those democratic decisions and realise that if the will is there the resources can be found?

Mr. Hayhoe: Resources require a little more than will. I know how easy it is for the Opposition to suggest additional expenditure, which presumably would be on top of the £24 billion to which they are already committed.

Mr. Dykes: Does my right hon. Friend intend pursuing through his ministerial colleagues in the Department of Transport discussions with London Regional Transport about converting tube stations to make them suitable for use by disabled persons?

Mr. Hayhoe: I do not think that that matter is directly relevant to the private Member's Bill which we are considering, but I shall certainly take account of my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Ashley: Will the right hon. Gentleman take this opportunity to repudiate the extraordinary view that the Budget concessions for charities make it more difficult for people to argue for the Bill? Will he acknowledge that the Bill is concerned with statutory services and that the Budget concessions have nothing whatsoever to do with those services?

Mr. Hayhoe: One must consider resources in relation to the whole of Government activity—the ability, or lack of ability, to raise taxation, and the ability to spend, or not to spend, as the case may be. It is difficult to make the sort of sharp differentiations to which the right hon. Gentleman refers.

Mr. Rowe: Does my right hon. Friend accept that many Conservative Members have great sympathy with his views in not wanting to put on the statute book provisions that cannot be met out of resources? Given the enormous support for the Bill, will my right hon. Friend

take great care not to cripple it? Will he have a word with my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General, who seems to believe that the scope for using the community programme and other programmes within the Health Service is much more limited than it really is? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Bill gives us an opportunity to make those programmes effective?

Mr. Hayhoe: As I made clear on Second Reading and in Committee, I am anxious not to support anything that would be unduly bureaucratic or entail undue administrative costs. The hon. Member for Monklands, West, (Mr. Clarke) acknowledged in introducing the Bill the difficulties in providing the substantial extra resources involved in the Bill's provisions.

Mr. Alfred Morris: The right hon. Gentleman has heard from both sides of the House of the deep concern about the Government's attitude to this humane and much needed Bill. Why does he still appear to insist that he knows better than virtually all the voluntary, professional, health and local authority organisations he consulted? They overwhelmingly backed the Bill and opposed the Government's neutering amendments. "Cynical", "hurried and ill-conceived" and "mean and short-sighted" are but a few of their very strong criticisms of the Government's intention to take whole clauses out of the Bill and to water down others. How can the right hon. Gentleman possibly justify that intention?

Mr. Hayhoe: I notice that the right hon. and learned Gentleman was reading out a prepared statement in the guise of asking a supplementary question. He knows, but did not acknowledge, that the local authority associations have made it clear from the start that there are substantial resource implications in the Bill. That is a matter of concern to them and to the Government.

Nurses (Residential Accommodation)

9. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the proposals he has received from regional health authorities to evict nurses from residential accommodation in order to realise assets for National Health Service funding.

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): Authorities have been asked to prepare plans showing how many units of staff accommodation they propose to provide from the beginning of 1988. The Department is currently discussing these plans, some only in draft form, with the 14 regional health authorities.

Mr. Pavitt: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that some health authorities are jumping the gun and that some nurses have already been given notice that they may be evicted? Is he aware that, under the 1977 legislation, nurses have the security of tenure which is given to other tenants? Is the right hon. Gentleman making money available so that these cases can be taken to the magistrates' courts? If such cases arise in Fulham before 10 April, will he go to the magistrates' court to evict the nurses?

Mr. Fowler: I think that the last point is a ludicrous mis-statement of what the policy is all about. What health authorities are doing is to review their stock of accommodation. It follows an examination which suggested that one fifth of National Health Service accommodation was standing empty. That is a totally indefensible position. Therefore, what we are doing is seeking to have a policy which uses National Health Service accommodation. What I have made clear, and what I repeat, is that special protection will be given to nurses in training.

Mr. Onslow: While I do not disagree with my right hon. Friend that there should be no waste in this sector of the Health Service any more than in any other, when the plans put forward by regional health authorities to help a district clearly do not take full account of the actual circumstances in that health district, will my right hon. Friend give instructions that they should be withdrawn for reconsideration?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, Sir. This is the whole purpose of what we are seeking to do. Ministers and the Department will review the plans that come up before they are put into operation.

Mr. Freeson: Why is the Minister fudging answers to this question? Is it not the case that it is Government policy for health authorities to dispose of all these properties, or as many of them as possible, and that action is being taken now? Will he ensure that that kind of policy is not given support by the Department in future and, if there are to be disposals of property in some cases, that the land and property in question are in the first instance offered to local authorities and other bodies, which provide much-needed services for areas in need?

Mr. Fowler: The right hon. Gentleman has entirely mis-stated the policy. What we are saying to health authorities is that if the property is not used, for example, if it is standing empty, it should be sold. Even the right hon. Gentleman might agree with that policy. We will protect the position of nurses in training and we will sell that accommodation to those who are living in it at special discount rates. In addition, we will put the proceeds of these sales to the benefit of the Health Service, and that is surely a sensible thing to do.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Is it not inappropriate for the National Health Service to behave in large measure like a housing authority, too often looking after accommodation which is under-utilised, poorly maintained and badly organised? Is he aware that in my own area, where housing policies have been reviewed, many long-standing tenants have been able to buy their own property, and other property has been sold off, thus releasing resources to improve nurses' accommodation?

Mr. Fowler: I entirely agree with everything that my hon. Friend has said. The fact is that the proceeds will go to health authorities. The first call on those proceeds will be to improve nurses' accommodation. The proceeds will also be used to improve the capital stock. Under this Government, in 1981 we released about £19 million from the sale of land and buildings to the benefit of the Health Service. Next year, that figure will be over £130 million —all to the benefit of the Health Service.

Mr. Dobson: Aside from all the waffle, will the Secretary of State guarantee that no district health authority will resort to the courts to force nurses to leave accommodation in which they wish to remain?

Mr. Fowler: I can give that guarantee. I would ask the hon. Gentleman, aside from his prejudice, to look at the policy and at the impact and effect that it will have upon developing services and facilities in the Health Service.

Smoking

10. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will take steps to seek to reduce the level of smoking among schoolchildren and young persons.

Mr. Fowler: We are currently spending £1 million in two television regions on a test campaign designed specifically to persuade young people not to smoke. In addition, the new voluntary agreement which I have reached with the tobacco industry includes specific measures designed to protect young people.

Mr. Janner: Does the Minister not appreciate that these measures are pathetic and inadequate to meet what remains the plague of smoking by young people? How many people in the country died of tobacco-related diseases last year, how many of them started when they were youngsters, and when will he ban tobacco advertising?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. and learned Gentleman will see from the steps announced yesterday that we are taking further steps to seek to dissuade young people particularly from taking up smoking. There is nothing between us in that respect. I believe that the agreement which we have reached will, in its many details, effect that purpose.

Mr. Sims: Is my right hon. Friend aware that while the agreement does not go as far as some of us would like, it is welcome as far as it goes, particularly in the emphasis that it puts on dissuading children and young people from taking up smoking? Is he satisfied that the provisions in the new agreement are adequate to control the practice of tobacco companies using their name to promote leisurewear, sportswear, concerts and holidays, all of which are aimed at the youth market?

Mr. Fowler: Yes. There is further work to be done about sports sponsorship and sponsorship of that sort, but we are seeking to control that as far as we can. The 10 points on which we have reached agreement will have the effect of further reducing smoking.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Will the right hon. Gentleman please answer the question posed to him by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner). The right hon. Gentleman has the figures. How many people died last year of tobacco-related diseases?

Mr. Fowler: One of the warnings gives the answer to that. The hon. Gentleman can see for himself that more than 30,000 people die each year in the United Kingdom from lung cancer. That will be one of the new warnings on cigarette packets. That is right.

Mr. Bellingham: Is my right hon. Friend aware that one of the main reasons for the big increase in smoking in schools is the reluctance and inability of headmasters to apply the necessary sanctions? What advice will my right hon. Friend give to headmasters?

Mr. Fowler: That is one part of it, but we can help in other parts by the restrictions that we are putting on poster advertising, by the other restrictions that will take place, and by the advertising that the tobacco industry itself is carrying out to dissuade retailers from selling cigarettes to young children under the age of 16.

Ms. Harman: Is the Secretary of State aware of the growing concern about the sale of Skoal Bandits, a tobacco substance sold for chewing? Is he aware that his chief medical officer has said that Skoal Bandits can cause disfigurement or death among children? Is he aware of the evidence from America which shows that the chewing of Skoal Bandits by children can cause cancer of the tongue, lips and mouth? Instead of seeking voluntary agreement, which clearly has not worked in America, will he ban the sale of Skoal Bandits to children?

Mr. Fowler: The same kind of restrictions apply to the advertising of Skoal Bandits as to the advertising of cigarettes in general. We are considering the evidence provided in the BBC's "That's Life" programme on Sunday — *[Interruption]* — which suggested that the advertising agreement had not been taken into account. Of course, we are concerned and shall seek to act on that.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to listen to the questions and the answers.

Health Service Pay

11. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement as to his policy on Health Service pay.

Mr. Fowler: The review bodies covering doctors, nurses and other professional groups have taken evidence and will report to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. The ancillary staffs Whitley Council discussed this year's pay claim at its meeting on 13 March. Other negotiations will also follow.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is there not poverty pay among Britain's NHS ancillary workers? Is it not true that male ancillary workers in the National Health Service earn £40 per week less than the national average manual worker and that women in a similar position earn £65 less? When decisions are taken by 1 April, may we have an assurance that the gap will be closed by the Government?

Mr. Fowler: The first meeting of the ancillary staff side part of the Whitley council took place on 13 March, at that meeting the management side put forward a proposal which could lead to a major revision of the existing grade structure. I am glad to say that the staff side welcomed that in principle and that negotiations will continue on it.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Secretary of State aware that a ward sister with major patient responsibility now gets less pay than a freshly recruited police constable of 19? Is he aware that the maximum that a staff nurse can earn is less than the minimum amount received by the lowest paid constable? Will he give an assurance that in the current negotiations he will rectify this manifest iniquity and will he also publicly repudiate the use of blackmail in saying that any above-inflation increase in nurses' pay will be taken back by cuts in services to patients?

Mr. Fowler: There is no question of blackmail. The hon. Gentleman will agree that there have been two years during which nurses have had above-average increases.

This Government set up an independent review body for nurses, which the nursing profession wanted for years. We provided that, and we were right to do so.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Terry Fields** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 March.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Fields: Does the Prime Minister recall her words in the Budget debate on 19 April 1961 and her outright condemnation of share speculation? Do not those words ring hollow today in view of the arrogant disregard—*[Interruption.]*—of the conventions of this House by a Prime Minister abusing that office in her dealings for five years in undisclosed shares? May we have an assurance that when the district auditors have finished investigating honest politicians in Liverpool and Lambeth they will open up the books of the Prime Minister?

Mr. Speaker: Order. First, that was a very long question, and, secondly, I could easily hear it.

The Prime Minister: In reply to the hon. Gentleman —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister heard the question.

The Prime Minister: I have scrupulously observed the long-standing convention governing the holding of shares by Ministers. These conventions are set out in a memorandum by the former Secretary of the Cabinet, which has been in the Library of the House since 1975. Under those conventions there is nothing which requires me, on assuming office, to dispose of my shares or to transfer them into a trust or into the name of investment managers.

Sir Peter Tapsell: Is it not a concept worthy of George Orwell that the only new idea that the official Opposition had during Budget week was to promise us all free burglar alarms——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Questions must relate to the Prime Minister.

Sir Peter Tapsell: —particularly bearing in mind that the tax policies of the Labour party are designed to turn burglary itself into a nationalised industry?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that my hon. Friend's question was very pertinent. My only comment on the Budget is that the Opposition were not prepared to condemn the reduction in the standard rate of income tax by one penny, and yet were not prepared to vote for it.

Mr. Kinnock: I understand that the Foreign Office will not make a statement in the House today about the incident yesterday in the Gulf of Sidra. May I therefore ask the Prime Minister whether she agrees that her Government's response to the atrocities, to the attacks on British citizens and to the United States proposal in January for economic sanctions against Libya has been a great deal more rational and responsible than the dangerous and destabilising attacks on Libya yesterday by American forces?

Can the right hon. Lady further tell me what view her Government expressed in the United States when they were informed of its intention to carry out naval exercises in the Gulf of Sidra some weeks ago? Finally, are United Kingdom citizens in Libya being advised to take any additional precautions in the wake of yesterday's incidents?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is referring to the Gulf of Sirte. Let me make it clear that United States ships and aircraft were operating in international waters and airspace and that they have every right so to do. It is important that international waters and airspace be kept open, and we support the right of the United States so to operate.

Mr. Kinnock: The rights of the United States navy to be in international waters are not in question in the House, and certainly nobody could or should accept Gaddafi's definition of what are international waters in the Gulf of Sidra, which is the same place as the right hon. Lady mentioned, as, she should know. What is in question is the United States judgment in exercising those rights. Does she not think that, in view of the destabilising effect of the exchange, it is appropriate for the British Prime Minister to express an opinion that is slightly more assertive than that which she has expressed so far?

The Prime Minister: I have expressed a clear opinion, and shall express it again. It is important that international waters and airspace be kept open. The United States was operating in international waters and airspace and we support its right to operate that way. Its planes were attacked by missiles. The missiles did not hit. In pursuance of article 51 of the United Nations charter, the United States is entitled to act in self-defence against such attacks.

Mr. Fletcher: Will my right hon. Friend accept that only the Opposition Benches would suggest that her personal conduct requires any investigation? Will she also accept that the Conservative Benches and the country have every confidence in her personal integrity?

The Prime Minister: The rules can be read in the Library of the House, I made my position clear. When specific scandalous, scurrilous and totally false allegations were made outside the House, I answered outside the House in meticulous detail to show that the allegations were completely unfounded and outrageous.

Q2. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wallace: Is the Prime Minister aware that I have received many representations from parents of children from two schools in my constituency—Symbister junior high in Shetland and St. Margaret's Hope in Orkney—about the state of those schools? One was described as dangerous and unsanitary, and the other as being a fire risk? Does she accept that for pupils to study day in and day out in such schools is as adverse to their education as any number of industrial disputes? How can she justify

policies which allow our children to be educated in schools of such damaged fabric when so many people are unemployed, particularly in the construction industry?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, education policy is either for the Secretary of State for Scotland, as the authority which decides upon capital grants, or for his local education authority. He should pursue the matter with them as a matter of priority.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Science and Engineering Research Council intends to remove the Royal Greenwich Observatory from Herstmonceaux in my constituency? Will she encourage the council to consider the impact of its decision on local tourism and ask it to demonstrate how that would be a cost-effective use of millions of pounds of research funds?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, it was the decision of the Science and Engineering Research Council to move the astronomy facilities from Herstmonceaux to one of three other places. It is consulting widely and will consult my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science before a final move is made. I know that it will be painful for those who live near Herstmonceaux if that decision were taken, and I must make it clear that there could be no removal from Herstmonceaux elsewhere before 1990. The consultations will take place, the opinion of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science will be sought and he will also consult the Department of the Environment before any decision is taken.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: In the course of her busy day, will the Prime Minister spare a thought for the people of Tyneside, and in particular the owners, management and work force of Swan Hunter shipbuilders? We are grateful for the interest which the Prime Minister is taking in the placement of the auxiliary oil replenishment vessel. The very future of our community on Tyneside depends upon it. Will the Prime Minister personally intervene to ensure that that order is committed to Swan Hunter and that the shipbuilding industry on the Tyne can survive?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, all Members who represent that part of the country, and, of course, those who are responsible for the rival shipyard in Northern Ireland, are making a very strong case that limited orders should go to their own yards. He will be aware that it is important that the orders should go to the place that has put in the most effective value-for-money tender. It will have to be considered mainly on that basis, and of course the matter is receiving a great deal of attention from my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry, forNorthern Ireland and for Defence. I have nothing further at the moment to say to the hon. Gentleman and those who take the view that he does.

Q3. **Mr. Stokes** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Stokes: My right hon. Friend will know of the great importance of British Leyland in my constituency and in many other neighbouring constituencies. Without referring specifically to the statement this afternoon, will she state in general that the Government's policy is either to merge or to sell constituent parts of BL to those who can make good—probably very good—profits, thus ensuring the long-term future of both employees and suppliers? Will she also state categorically that bids from the United States of America will not be turned down under what *The Times* calls today "perverse patriotism"?

The Prime Minister: Yes of course it is this Government's policy to secure in the end the privatisation of British Leyland. With that in mind we were making contacts to see whether we could have the privatisation of BL Trucks, Land Rover, Leyland and Freight Rover. My hon. Friend must await the statement, but I make it absolutely clear that we are concerned that there should be a prosperous industry with good prospects for the future for the people who work in it. We are concerned that some day it should be able to stand on its own feet without making extra demands on the taxpayer. Like other firms, it has to run without subsidy.

Q4. **Mr. Beith** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Beith: In seeking the best value for money in the AOR vessel contract, will the Prime Minister bear in mind that if Swan Hunter were to underestimate its costs it would be the shareholders who would pay, but that if Harland and Wolff were to underestimate its costs it might be the taxpayer who would be expected to bail it out as a nationalised yard?

The Prime Minister: All hon. Members who have made representations to me have made it very clear that we must watch very carefully to ensure that there is no element of cross-subsidisation in any bid. We are taking that very much into account and having a look at the detailed figures.

Mr. Franks: As the Prime Minister has been invited to consider individual shareholdings, may I invite her to consider the individual shareholdings of 11,400 employees in the Vickers shipyard, representing over 81 per cent. of the total work force, who have applied to buy shares in the company?

The Prime Minister: Yes, this is popular capitalism at work, which has no place in Labour party policy. I wish it well in the allocation of shares to them and in the future of their shipyard.

Q5. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Prime Minister find time to consider the inquiry into the case of Isabel Schwartz, the social worker who was killed by her mentally ill client, who had been released into the community without adequate assessment of her needs? Does this case not graphically illustrate the need for the Disabled Persons (Services Consultation and Representation) Bill to be passed? Is the Prime Minister aware that if it had been passed in 1982, Isabel Schwartz might be alive today?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the Government's view of the Bill is that it should be turned into a workable Bill that will not put too many extra

burdens on local authorities. We are particularly aware of the concerns, which the hon. Gentleman has mentioned, about these terrible tragedies. We shall do everything that we can to try to avoid them.

Q6. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Short: Does the Prime Minister agree with the majority of women in Britain, and with many men, that pictures of naked women in mass circulation newspapers should be made illegal?

The Prime Minister: The Obscene Publications Act would already apply if the hon. Lady has any complaints to make.

Mr. Pavitt: On a point of order arising out of questions, Mr. Speaker. During Question Time, you will have heard a number of references to a voluntary agreement between the tobacco industry and the Minister for Health. I tried to see a copy of that agreement in the Library this morning, but hon. Members have not had the opportunity to see it. Can you give instructions so that such a copy can be placed in the Library, so that we can see what has been decided?

Mr. Speaker: This is a matter for the Minister, but I am sure that the Front Bench will have heard the hon. Gentleman's request.

Mr. Terry Fields: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for members of the Arthur Daley tendency on the Conservative Benches to seek to muzzle genuine questions to the Prime Minister on a matter of national importance by their——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman had an opportunity to ask his question. I do not think that he was muzzled. I intervened to give him some protection.

British Leyland

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Paul Channon): As the House is aware, BL and the Government have been in discussion with several companies about the privatisation of the main Land Rover-Leyland businesses. Of these, General Motors has made proposals concerning Leyland Trucks, Freight Rover and Land Rover.

In relation to the truck and van sectors, the talks with GM concentrated on the possibilities for combining the respective Leyland and Bedford businesses, to the mutual benefit of GM and BL. In respect of Land Rover, where there are opportunities for Land Rover in expanding European and world markets, the Government were determined that, as a condition of privatisation, special arrangements should be concluded to safeguard UK interests, including a measure of real UK control over the future of the business. For its part, however, GM wished to have effective control of the company from the outset and an assurance of full ownership and control within a relatively short period, and it became clear that it was not able to compromise on these points. Despite the view taken of the GM proposal by the BL board from its commercial standpoint, this was not a basis for an agreement acceptable to the Government in the national interest.

GM has stated that it is not willing to proceed with an arrangement for Leyland Trucks and Freight Rover which excludes the Land Rover company. Therefore, the talks have been ended.

The BL board will give further study to the alternative ways forward for all the businesses concerned. For Leyland Trucks, which operates in a depressed and fiercely competitive market, the board will continue to examine the possibilities for collaboration with other manufacturers and other ways to sustain its improving trend in performance. The Government continue to support the commercial development of this business, in accordance with established plans. For Land Rover and Freight Rover, the board will include in its examination the various expressions of interest which have already been announced, with a view to recommending the course most likely to achieve the privatisation of the businesses in a way which best secures their future.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): Does the Secretary of State recognise that he has today announced the collapse of a venture that was ill-conceived in purpose, anti-British in effect and handled with almost unbelievable incompetence? Now that the Secretary of State has confirmed the ending of the talks, can he say that this is the final end of this discredited proposal? Can we exclude any notion of selling valuable parts of British Leyland to its competitors?

The Secretary of State will also no doubt recollect that only a few weeks ago he was standing at the Dispatch Box stating confidently that assurances could be given by General Motors to satisfy all United Kingdom interests. He was insisting on a sharp deadline for the submission of bids, so urgent was the matter that had to be determined.

Is it the case that, in the discussions that have just ended, the Government at one stage proposed that General Motors acquire 49 per cent. of Land Rover, with an option to increase its shareholding as time, and no doubt public opinion, passed on? What was the role of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in those discussions? Is it not the case that he initiated the secret talks 18 months ago? Despite that, did he not elbow the Secretary of State aside in those discussions and, fearful of the political consequences of what he had initially proposed, bring the talks to an end?

Can we now be assured by the Secretary of State that there will be no question, during the lifetime of the Government, of Land Rover or any other part of the British Leyland Group passing out of British control? Is the Secretary of State aware that it is only the strongly expressed voice of Parliament and people that forced the Government to change direction on this issue?

Will the Government now consider apologising to the British Leyland group for the damaging commercial uncertainty which this whole affair has cost them, including the damage to the Austin Rover group caused by the Ford talks, which were also brought to an end by the voice of Parliament and people? Do the Government realise that, in hanging a "for sale" notice over the premises, they have been culpably negligent in their stewardship of a crucial part of British industry?

The Secretary of State says that the Government will continue to support the commercial development of Leyland Trucks in accordance with established plans. Since it is the established plans which have led us to this pass, is it not time to revise them? Can I suggest that the Government, for once, give proper backing to Leyland Trucks? Why do they not compliment it on its commercial success and stand behind it? Can the Secretary of State tell me whether it is true that the British Leyland board stopped the Austin Rover group putting advertisements in the British newspapers about the success of its ambitions because they ran contrary to the Government's then policy? I should like the Secretary of State to give me a specific answer to that question.

I have one final question to put to the Secretary of State. Since we are now in a fast-moving situation, can the House be given an assurance that there will be no further announcement about any sale of British Leyland before the House returns from the Easter recess? Can we be assured that, before any further moves are made, there will be a full debate in the House so that hon. Members in all parts of the House can express their opinions upon it?

Mr. Channon: I have seldom, if ever, heard a more exaggerated set of questions than that. I shall deal with the points the right hon. and learned Gentleman has raised in his exaggerated questions. I can assure him that no decisions will be taken about any of these matters before the House returns from the Easter recess. As to the question of a debate, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has already told the House the Government's position on that, and it remains unchanged.

As to the other questions raised by the right hon. and learned Gentleman, I have always made it clear to the House, at least I hope I have, that we wanted adequate assurances before we would be prepared to sell Land Rover to General Motors. There might have been a compromise. That is certainly something that was discussed. But it was quite impossible to reach a situation in which General Motors insisted on having effective control of the company and an assurance of full ownership

and control within a relatively short period. I could not recommend that to my colleagues or the House, and I think that that was right.

We shall continue with the established plans for trucks, which are already known. I hope that the BL board will now be considering all the options available to it, and will make recommendations to me. The Government will then consider them in the normal way.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the fact that GM has pulled out means that Leyland Trucks, with its successful recent record in terms of its product, price and market share, will now need further investment from the Government and the taxpayer, just as other successful companies, such as British Aerospace have merited and gained such investment in recent years. Might not the partisan and short-sighted barriage of questions and statements from the Opposition have done more harm to the future and jobs of those working in Leyland Trucks than GM could ever do? Will my right hon. Friend resist the suggestion to hold an urgent debate on British Leyland, as that will do nothing more than exacerbate the problems which he is trying so hard to resolve?

Mr. Channon: I have already said that the Government will continue to support the commercial development of the truck business in accordance with the established plans. Of course the future of Leyland Trucks will be a matter for the board to consider in the normal way, and it will also come forward with proposals in the normal way. At present, there is no suggestion of any further equity being needed for Leyland Trucks or any other part of the Leyland business.

I cannot see any purpose in holding a debate until we have something to debate and until I have recommendations to put to the House.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Does the Secretary of State agree that GM has a legitimate grievance in that, when it was first propositioned by his predecessor — now the chairman of the Conservative Party—in mid-1984, to take over the whole lot, no such conditions were attached to his eagerness to be rid of British Leyland's commercial vehicles? Conditions have been imposed only as a result of quite proper pressure in the House during the past few weeks. Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that representations are being made by Austin Rover retailers, because the damaging uncertainty hanging over the future of British Leyland as a whole is affecting showroom sales? Will he make it his business to restore calm in the future of BL as soon as possible?

Mr. Channon: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster publicly sought would-be buyers, as was made clear to the House some time ago. General Motors' original interest arose out of talks about mutual problems over trucks. It was always clear from the start that any interest in Land Rover/Range Rover might raise such difficulties.

I think that the whole House would like to pay tribute to Austin Rover's progress, and to congratulate the company on its increasing exports — [AN HON. MEMBER: "Then why flog it?"]—particularly to Europe. I am surprised that the Labour party does not seem to want to hear this part of my answer. In 1985, exports increased by 10 per cent. over the figure for 1984, and in the first three months of 1986, they are 35 per cent. up on the same period in 1985. The new Rover 800 executive car has excellent export prospects, and I hope that it will spearhead Austin Rover's re-entry into the American market.

Mr. Michael Heseltine (Henley): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the bus and truck industries of Britain and Europe now have huge excess capacity? When judging the board's recommendations, what criteria will he have in mind in determining a strategy that will protect British interests?

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Re-rat.

Mr. Channon: I agree that there is a huge excess capacity in the truck and bus business throughout western Europe. We will all have to consider that factor carefully. Indeed, the board of BL will have to consider it carefully in recommending a future course of action to me.

I shall ensure that all relevant factors are put before me before I make recommendations.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent) *rose*——

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As one who has been had up for unparliamentary language, may I ask whether it is in order for an hon. Member to call another hon. Member a rat?

Mr. Speaker: I heard no such——

Several Hon. Members *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Speaker: Order. If an hon. Member said that, I would ask him to withdraw it, but I— *[Interruption.]* Order. I repeat what I said yesterday. Let us keep our parliamentary language on a high and traditional level.

Mr. Foot: When did the Minister and the Government make the remarkable discovery that it was the desire and determination of General Motors to take over the whole business?

Mr. Channon: It was always clear that General Motors wanted to take over the whole business. What I have told the House is that we wished to see whether a compromise could be found that was acceptable to all the parties concerned. No compromise was found; therefore, the talks were broken off.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): Would my right hon. Friend not agree that the breakdown of the talks is bad news for General motors and for British Leyland? Would he not accept that the misplaced jingoism of the past four weeks was started by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) with his intemperate private notice question of 3 February? Will my right hon. Friend make sure that the extra redundancies that there will be, and the extra demands for taxpayers' money, are laid firmly on the doorstep of Opposition Members?

Mr. Channon: It would not be right for me to speculate on the effect on General Motors. As to the effects on the British Leyland subsidiaries, I am sure that I will be able to bring to the House proposals made to me by the BL board that will offer them a secure future.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): In the light of his statement, will the right hon. Gentleman

[Mr. Terry Davis]

confirm that the talks broke down over Land Rover and that the Government were willing to see Freight Rover taken over by General Motors, with a consequent loss of 1,700 jobs in Birmingham?

Mr. Channon: The consequence that the hon. Gentleman suggests would not necessarily follow.

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Land Rover management buy-out team has received no more than an acknowledgment of the proposals that it made three weeks ago? Is it not time that my right hon. Friend asked Hill Samuel and the Department of Trade and Industry to start talking to Schroder about the buy-out and to make some progress?

Mr. Channon: With respect to my right hon. Friend, he is not quite right about that. I have myself had two long meetings with Mr. Andrews and his colleagues, and I understand that they had a meeting with Hill Samuel that finished only recently; so talks are in progress, and all those matters are being fully studied.

Mr. George Park (Coventry, North-East): Will the Secretary of State now answer the question asked by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), and acknowledge the damage done to BL by the abortive negotiations? Will he abandon plans to fragment BL, and allow it to make progress of the kind that he himself has just referred to?

Mr. Channon: I do not want to do that, and I will not do so. I do not acknowledge what the hon. Gentleman says. Anyone who says that it is wrong to sell off constituent parts of BL should reflect on the success of Jaguar before he eats his words.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, if negotiations between British Leyland and General Motors had been successful, General Motors would have made this country the centre of its European commercial vehicles operation, and that that would have been of great benefit to this country, bringing new investment and new employment? Given the concern of those who work in Bedford Commercial Vehicles, can my right hon. Friend impress upon General Motors the importance of GM continuing to manufacture commercial vehicles in Bedfordshire to sustain employment there?

Mr. Channon: On the latter part of that question, I am certain that it must be very much in the interests of all concerned that that should be the case. I share my hon. Friend's view of the matter. The first part of his question is a matter for General Motors, but I have certainly heard the suggestion made.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Is it right that the main board of British Leyland should continue to have only two executive directors? Will the Secretary of State assure the House that there will be no victimisation of any executive manager of BL who has opposed all or any part of this package which has been approved by the main board members, not all of whom are successful business men?

Mr. Channon: The House knows that a new chairman of the BL board is to take over in the next few weeks. He will no doubt wish to consider the composition of the board. I shall ask him to look at the hon. Gentleman's point, which is a very good one. I shall also ensure—although I am sure that there is no question of it, anyway—that there is no victimisation.

Mr. Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): In the light of the Opposition crowing in their isolationist joy about turning away much-needed investment in our truck and commercial vehicle industry, will my right hon. Friend tell the House, as a result of the developments that he has announced today, what discussions he has had with General Motors about keeping the design and development of commercial vehicles in this country and what future he envisages for the commercial vehicle industry now that Ford have joined up with Iveco and General Motors will be forced to consider alternatives?

Mr. Channon: Of course I agree with my hon. Friend about the wholly hypocritical attitude of the Labour party. First it was against the deal; now it complains because it is over. That is absolutely typical of its attitude. I have not had discussions with General Motors about the second part of my hon. Friend's question. That is a matter for General Motors, but it is a very important question. I very much hope that General Motors will continue to play such a role in this country.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Has the Laird Group withdrawn its offer and proposals for the future of Leyland Bus, which would have meant the closure of the Workington plant? And what is the status of the discussions with Aveling Barford, which is visiting the Workington plant today?

Mr. Channon: No, I do not think that it has withdrawn its proposals. Aveling Barford has also made other proposals. The BL board will consider those and any other proposals that are put to it, including management proposals, if any are made, and will make recommendations to me in the course, I hope, of the next few weeks.

Mr. Graham Bright (Luton, South): Is my right hon. Friend not aware that this decision has cast an enormous question mark over the future of Bedford trucks and that the opportunity for General Motors to make this country the centre of its research, development and design for the whole of Europe has been blown? If GM does negotiate with Renault trucks or Volvo—we know that it is talking to them—those skills will be lost to Europe. That is exactly what we should be trying to stop. The GM deal would have enabled this country to have a proper truck manufacturing operation. The people of Luton and Bedfordshire will feel that this chance has been blown.

Mr. Channon: I very much hope that my hon. Friend's views will not be justified. I have no reason to assume that they will be justified. I am sure that GM will look carefully at all the alternative ways forward for the Bedford business, which I agree is extremely important for Britain and, I should have thought, for General Motors.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): Is the Secretary of State aware that his statement that a condition of the privatisation of Land Rover should be that it is retained in United Kingdom ownership is very welcome? However, is he also aware that the uncertainty is very damaging not only to this business but also to the volume car business? Will he seek to bring the discussions,

particularly the management buy-out proposals of Mr. Andrews, to an early conclusion so that the uncertainty can be cleared up?

Mr. Channon: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his support in the first part of his question. I agree with him that it would be helpful if these matters could be brought to a conclusion in the reasonably near future.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Is my right hon. Friend aware that seven heavy truck manufacturers are still based in Britain, none of which exports substantially to Europe, but that, on the other hand, the whole of western Europe has only seven heavy truck manufacturers, all of which export substantially to Britain? Have we not lost a great opportunity to restructure the British truck industry? Will not GM now run off and make a deal with one of our European competitors? Is it not the Labour party that is wholly to blame, for trying to pull the Union Jack over the eyes of the voters?

Mr. Channon: I have never disguised from the House the fact that, if a satisfactory deal with General Motors had been worked out, it would have had many advantages. It is not possible to achieve that deal. We shall have to work on other solutions, and I hope we shall find a satisfactory one.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East) Is not the lesson of this unhappy whole episode that the Government must never again try deceptively and surreptitiously, behind the backs of the British public and behind the back of Parliament to dispose of such a vital part—[AN HON. MEMBER: "What role are you playing?"]—I am trying to protect British interests—to dispose of a vital part of British industry. Is it not true that this rotten manoeuvre was aborted only by the brilliant interventions of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith)?

Mr. Channon: I refute entirely the allegation that the Government behaved deceptively. If the Opposition are seriously suggesting that all negotiations should be carried out in public, they will have a heavy price to pay.

Sir Paul Bryan (Boothferry): Since the most successful part of the motor industry in Britain is owned by the Americans and will probably shortly be owned by Nissan, what is wrong with Land Rover being owned by the Americans if they produce a better product?

Mr. Channon: I judged that it was right, and that it would receive the support of the House, if we could get a deal with General Motors on which there could be a compromise about the ownership of Land Rover. I was not prepared to recommend to my colleagues a situation in which General Motors had effective control of that company and the assurance of full ownership and control within a relatively short time.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Is the Secretary of State aware that the workers in Coventry, the midlands and elsewhere, instead of hearing the Secretary of State continuing to tout around the world saying, "Anybody want to buy a car industry?", would have preferred a categorical assurance that Leyland would remain in public ownership? That would end the speculation and worry about workers' jobs.

The Secretary of State has said on a number of occasions that the large-scale volume production of vehicles is essential if we are to compete in international markets. Why does the Secretary of State not reverse the process of recent months and take into public ownership Vauxhall, Ford and Peugeot to create a British motor industry capable of the volume production necessary to compete in international markets?

Mr. Channon: Perhaps we shall see that unfold with all the details as we approach the general election. With regard to jobs, security and prosperity, one should consider what has happened at Jaguar since it was privatised. There has been an increase in its sales and employees. The idea that one has to keep industries in public ownership for them to be successful is a foolish and idiotic idea, believed only by Opposition Members.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Will my right hon. Friend take comfort from the fact that there is widespread support for his policy of returning viable parts of British Leyland to the private sector? Will my right hon. Friend bear it in mind that British Leyland, although technically one company, is a group of companies? Although the truck division would undoubtedly prosper in General Motors, Land Rover and Range Rover are a specialist company, rather like Jaguar. They may well do better standing on their own, financed by the private sector.

Mr. Channon: I take note of what my hon. Friend says; it is a view that many people share.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Secretary of State clarify what he meant in his opening remarks:

"The BL board will give further study to the alternative ways forward for all the businesses concerned"?

I stress "all".

Does not this resurrect the question of Bathgate? I ask the Secretary of State whether he or the Minister of State—who, frankly, has been very helpful in these matters when I and my colleagues have approached him in relation to the complex problems of Bathgate — will give particular attention to the shop stewards' and Scottish Office initiative in relation to Bathgate and Mr. Anthony Bamford. Can some machine capacity be retained at what is the biggest machine shop under one roof in Europe? I see the Secretary of State consulting the Minister of State. The suggestion makes sense. Can I have an assurance that the Department of Trade and Industry will take it seriously?

Mr. Channon: Naturally I shall consider seriously anything that the hon. Gentleman proposes. I am anxious not to reawaken hopes that will have to be dashed again. The chances of doing what he suggests are extremely remote, but I shall certainly have his suggestion examined.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): As my right hon. Friend is under fire today for defending British interests, can I urge him not to be disheartened, and to appreciate that there is widespread support for the privatisation of parts, if not all of BL? Will he assure the House that the component sourcing policies of BL and parts thereof will be continued, and that the British industry will also be safeguarded in future?

Mr. Channon: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. He raises an important point, with which I agree.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Would the Secretary of State like to place on record his praise for the staff and work force of Leylad Trucks, whose products have risen

[Mr. Jack Straw]

to the top of the best-selling league, despite the damaging uncertainty which this farrago has created? Can he spell out precisely the time scale that he now has in mind for the so-called privatisation of Leyland Trucks, given the fact that his original time scale has been aborted?

Mr. Channon: I certainly agree with the hon. Gentleman about the immense progress that has been made in Leyland Trucks. He may recall that, in my original statement, I mentioned the trend in its performance, and I met a deputation from the unions in Leyland Trucks recently. I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I would prefer not to give him a firm answer about a timetable at this stage because that would be misleading. I must await recommendations from the BL board about the best way forward for Leyland Trucks, and I hope that I shall have proposals in the not too distant future.

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): Will my right hon. Friend, in accepting my thanks for this further statement, which is a step towards the protection of the jobs of the workers, many of whom live in my constituency, now please instruct the bankers of BL, through the board, to give full and proper information to the managers and all those other companies which are bidding for BL, and not the paucity of information which has been the apology so far given and which has shown their partiality and preference?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support, but I cannot accept what he said in the last part of his question. As I said in my original statement, the board will now include in its examination the various expressions of interest which have already been announced so that it can recommend to me the best course forward. I am told that all normal information has been given, but I shall immediately check that with BL.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Why is the Secretary of State such a dogmatic devotee of privatisation? Does he not recall that the former incompetent private owners of BL got it into such a mess that it had to be rescued with public funds? Will he now give the House an undertaking that the Government will keep their incompetent hands off BL and allow it to continue to succeed so that, as taxpayers, we can get back the moneys which we put in to rescue it?

Mr. Channon: I am afraid that I disagree with the hon. Gentleman. All experience shows—I cited Jaguar earlier—that, if we can get the subsidiaries of the companies into private hands, it will give the companies a better opportunity for a secure long-term future. That is true not only for the motor industry, but for every other industry.

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is a great community of interest in the future of Leyland Trucks, Freight Rover and many other products in the continuation of reopening of negotiations with GM? Will he make it clear that it is not the British Government who are seeking to close the door on further negotiations?

Mr. Channon: As I have already said, the Government are always ready to consider fresh proposals, but at present there are no plans for the resumption of talks.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Secretary of State aware of the outrage felt in the west midlands at what the Government have done over BL and the way in which they have acted? Is it not a supreme irony that, when the chairman of the Conservative party was Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, he started negotiations with GM, yet he has told his Cabinet colleagues that selling to GM is simply not on?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman is vastly exaggerating what he calls the outrage in the west midlands, and, as usual, he is distorting the actions of my right hon. Friend, who has been extremely helpful at all stages, as indeed all my colleagues have been. This is a Government decision, and the hon. Gentleman is talking rubbish.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will call the Conservative Members who have been standing, and the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery), who has suddenly got to his feet, for a further five minutes. However, I must bear in mind that further business today is on a timetable.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend place in the Library a copy of the final terms upon which GM was prepared to purchase Freight Rover, Leyland Trucks and Land Rover?

Mr. Channon: I shall certainly consider what my hon. Friend says, but the talks did not end in that way. I put various proposals orally to GM, but it was not prepared to accept them. So I do not think that that is a relevant issue at present.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Now that the wedding is off, can my right hon. Friend assure me that taxpayers will not be asked to foot the bill?

Mr. Channon: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Is my right hon. Friend aware that I am satisfied with his statement this afternoon—so much so, indeed, that when I heard during the weekend that the GM deal was off, I ordered a Range Rover yesterday? Is it not time that the House set an example and that many more right hon. and hon. Members brought British cars? I speak as a Rover user, and if hon. Members set an example, I am sure that the country would follow, and British Leyland in private hands would be a highly successful company.

Mr. Channon: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for his support, which I have been accustomed to receive over the years on many occasions. If all the people who talked about BL bought a BL car, BL would have a higher proportion of the British share of the market than it does at present.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will my right hon. Friend accept that many of us have a great deal of sympathy for him in that he was landed with this problem so early in what will be a distinguished tenure of office? Will he further accept that many of us respect him for the difficult decision that he had to make, and believe that he has made the right one? Land Rover, which is a specialist manufacturer, should remain—not in a narrow, patriotic sense, but in a proper sense—in British hands. Will he go one step further and make the other proper decision, which is to back the zeal, ability,

willingness and money of the management-worker buy-out, and make an early decision so that this great company can go forward for its workers, for the country and for us all?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful, indeed, to my hon. Friend for his support which, again, I have been accustomed to receiving on many occasions. The management buy-out will be considered together with the other expressions of interest by the board in order to come forward with recommendations for the best course in the future. It would be wrong for me to prejudge that at this stage, but I know that there is considerable support in the House for that. There may well be other options available.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): Does my right hon. Friend appreciate that his statement will come as a great disappointment to those who were hoping for some rationalisation of the British truck industry? Does he agree that those who have wrapped themselves in phoney patriotism in an attempt to oppose that rationalisation will bear a great deal of responsibility if GM now finds itself a European partner, and we end up with no truck industry? Does he appreciate that, if he resumes negotiations with GM for the sale of a controlling interest in both Leyland Trucks and Land Rover, he will have considerable support behind him on these Benches?

Mr. Channon: I note what my hon. Friend says, but I cannot add to what I said earlier. There are no plans at present for the resumption of talks, and it would be misleading if I were to pretend otherwise. However, I note my hon. Friend's comments and I shall come forward with further proposals as soon as I can.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, although the management buy-out is well accepted by many people, it also finds a great deal of favour among the work force? Is my right hon. Friend aware that the trade unions have said that they are willing to become involved financially in such a management buy-out? Such aspirations have been raised to a high level in the west midlands. We hope that they will be realised.

Mr. Channon: I acknowledge what my hon. Friend has said, but it would be quite wrong of me to express a view at this stage on the various alternatives.

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): Does the Secretary of State agree that a much better bargain could be obtained for Leyland Trucks in a year or two if the division were kept in public hands until then?

Mr. Channon: I shall, of course, consider that possibility.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Flannery.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for balancing the questions——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has only just started to rise.

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Gentleman has been standing up continually.

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that a Japanese firm has a great rival to Land Rover—a four-wheel drive car which looks very much like the Land Rover? Is it not true that that Japanese firm is owned by General Motors of America? Does it not follow that, because costs in Japan are much lower, if General Motors gets hold of the Land Rover BL production machine here, it could, from America, in the interests of profit, easily close down Land Rover to make profits in Japan?

Mr. Channon: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, if there had been a deal with General Motors on Land Rover, we would have required satisfactory assurances from that company which would have ensured the future of the Solihull plant, the local content and the other things which I have described to the House many times.

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): Will my right hon. Friend accept that many Conservative Members and many people in the automotive industry consider world market share profitability and British jobs to be more important than all the jingoism of the past few weeks? Will he convey to General Motors and to Ford that they are as welcome to prosper and expand in this country as British firms are welcome to do in the United States?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to draw attention to the importance of General Motors and of Ford in the British economy. They are both large employers which put a great deal of money and effort into the United Kingdom. I can assure my hon. Friend that the Government think that they are very welcome.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Is my right hon. Friend aware that a majority of Conservative Members regret the collapse of the General Motors talks, as a great opportunity lost? Would it not have been better for the Government to concentrate on securing a successful motor industry in Britain rather than to respond to the misguided and jingoistic calls from those who will leave a price to be paid in lost jobs and higher taxes?

Mr. Channon: I note what my hon. Friend says. I hope that I shall be able to come forward, in the not-too-distant future, with proposals on the future of Land Rover and Freight Rover which my hon. Friend will welcome.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall bear in mind when we next discuss this matter those hon. Members who have not been called today.

BILLS PRESENTED

National Health Service (Amendment)

Mr. Secretary Fowler, supported by Mr. Secretary Edwards, Mr. Secretary King, Mr. Michael Jopling, Mr. Kenneth Clarke, Mr. John MacGregor, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Barney Hayhoe and Mr. Ray Whitney, presented a Bill to apply certain enactments, orders and regulations relating to food to certain health service bodies and premises; to make further provision as to pharmaceutical services under the National Health Service Act 1977 and the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 and the remuneration of persons providing those services, general medical services, general dental services or general ophthalmic services under those Acts; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 119].

Representation of the People (Amendment)

Mr. Robert Rhodes James presented a Bill to amend the House of Commons (Redistribution of Seats) Acts 1949 and 1958, and the Representation of the People Act 1983, to provide for a reduction in the number of parliamentary constituencies to 500, with a minimum constituency population of 100,000, and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 16 May and to be printed. [Bill 120].

Immigration Act 1971 (Amendment)

4.17 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to establish a right of appeal in the United Kingdom to those persons refused entry to the United Kingdom, including those persons visiting the United Kingdom.

Today, as on every other day, some 50 people, mostly visitors to Britain from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan, will be refused entry to the United Kingdom. Last year, more than 18,000 people were refused entry to this country and more than 10,000 were black and Asian people from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan. Each person refused entry is given a form saying that they have been refused entry because an immigration officer does not believe that they are a genuine visitor. The form says that the person has a right of appeal but that appeal can be exercised only when the visitor has returned home.

The refusal ruins the person's holiday as they lose their fares and other expenses incurred. It is not surprising, therefore, that more than three quarters of the people compelled to return home do not bother to appeal. If their appeal was successful, most would not have the money or opportunity to return to this country.

My Bill seeks to provide an effective right of appeal which can be exercised by the person while he or she is in this country. That was first recommended in 1967 by Sir Roy Wilson, QC, who chaired the committee on immigration appeals. On the Second Reading of the Immigration Appeals Bill in 1969, the then Home Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) said:

"It is implicit in the Wilson Committee's Report that an appellant who has reached the United Kingdom and is refused entry on arrival should normally be allowed to remain here to await the determination of his appeal".—[*Official Report*, 21 January 1969; Vol. 776, c. 494.]

Regrettably, the provisions conferring that general right of appeal were never brought into force and were not included in the Immigration Act 1971, which repealed the 1969 Act but retained the basic appeals system.

Under section 13(3), the only rights of appeal that can be exercised here are by persons holding a current entry clearance or a current work permit. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) said in Standing Committee on the Immigration Bill in 1971:

"Every lawyer knows how difficult it is to prosecute any action, however simple, from a distance of 30 miles; and that to instruct legal advisers, interview witnesses, discuss documents not in one's possession, can be extremely difficult, even if one is operating between London and the provinces. Operating between London and Karachi would be virtually impossible. To insist that someone who has the right of appeal under the Bill should exercise it from such a distance, and in those circumstances, is to bring the whole procedure of appeal into contempt."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 20 May 1971; c. 1072.]

Nearly ten people refused entry as visitors turn for help every day to Members of this House or of another place. Hon. Members usually request a stop on the person's removal and that they be given temporary admission. Of the 8,500 people granted temporary admission last year, only 187 absconded.

Introducing a right of appeal which can be operated here, easily and simply, would be a victory for natural justice, as it would allow a person appealing to be present when his appeal is considered. An effective right of appeal

would, it is to be hoped, improve the quality of decisions taken by immigration officers. That would reduce the number of people refused entry. That in turn would reduce the number of people who are now forced to turn to hon. Members for help and the number of letters which hon. Members have to write on behalf of their constituents to the Minister of State, Home Office. That reform would most definitely be welcomed by many of our constituents who are angry at the way in which their relatives and friends are now refused entry to this country for holidays and at the conditions and circumstances in which those people have to wait, often for considerable lengths of time. The Bill would make a major contribution to improving Britain's tourist image.

For all those compelling reasons, I commend this modest and moderate Bill to the House and to the Government.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Max Madden, Mr. Stan Thorne, Mr. Harry Cohen, Mr. Derek Fatchett, Mrs. Margaret Beckett, Mr. Peter Pike, Mr. Alfred Dubs, Ms. Clare Short, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Sydney Bidwell, Mr. Dave Nellist and Mr. David Winnick.

Immigration Act 1971 (Amendment)

Mr. Max Madden accordingly presented a Bill to establish a right of appeal in the United Kingdom to those persons refused entry to the United Kingdom, including those persons visiting the United Kingdom: and the same was read the First time; And ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 25 April and to be printed. [Bill 121.]

Orders of the Day

Gas Bill

[2nd Allotted Day]

Order for Third Reading read.

4.20 pm

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Peter Walker): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I should like to express my gratitude to all those who worked over the years in preparing and drafting the Bill and in helping us to steer it through the Committee and Report stages. I should like to express my gratitude also to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State and to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State who carried the great burden of the Bill through those stages. I hope that hon. Members will agree that they performed that task with skill, application and courtesy and in the best traditions of the House. It would be no help to the Opposition if I paid tribute to them, but I must say that they vigorously propounded their arguments against the various facets with which they disagreed. I think that hon. Members will agree that, irrespective of one's views for or against the legislation, in Committee the arguments were vigorously propounded and genuinely considered. The Bill at Third Reading is, one would hope, better than it was at Second Reading.

As I pointed out on Second Reading, irrespective of whether one agreed or disagreed with the policy, the Bill was carefully studied and examined before being presented to the House. It was given careful consideration from the time the Conservative party was returned to Government in 1983. International comparisons were made and alternative methods of privatisation were studied. Conclusions were reached after careful consideration.

The Bill was carefully drafted. It was not rushed past the parliamentary draftsmen. Committee members will have recognised that, according to the standards of a normal controversial Bill, the legislation did not require a great deal of Government amendment. There were 250 Government amendments to the Bill which nationalised the gas industry. That legislation was beaten by the Bill which nationalised the electricity industry, to which there were 353 Government amendments. There were large numbers of Government amendments to other privatisation measures. There were 63 Government amendments to the Gas Bill, most of which were consequential. The lesson to be learned is that greater care taken in drafting is of benefit in Committee and in the House.

When I moved the Second Reading, I argued that we wished to ensure that the legislation was to the benefit of gas consumers. Its aim was to improve competition, to cover safety elements and to improve the position of employees. On Third Reading, I recommend the Bill using those same arguments. A number of improvements and changes have been made since Second Reading.

On Second Reading, the Opposition pointed out on a number of occasions that the Bill as drafted looked after certain aspects of consumer interests but that there was a range of consumer interests at which the Gas Consumers Council would not be able to look. I assured hon.

[Mr. Peter Walker]

Members that legally the council would be able to consider matters at which the National Gas Consumers Council had looked. Understandably, the National Gas Consumers Council and Committee members felt that it would be better to spell that out in the Bill rather than leave it open to dispute and hence arguments about validity. On Report, we spelled out the the range of activities which the consumers council of the denationalised gas industry would be able to consider.

The Government want the new Gas Consumers Council to be effective. It will be the responsibility not of my Department but of the Department of Trade and Industry, which has responsibility for consumer affairs. The Department of Trade and Industry has been having meetings in all the regions concerned to study the ways in which the new council can be effectively set up with approprate staffing and facilities to give good service to the consumer.

Not only the Government but British Gas are anxious to see a continuation of the benefits of a good consumer service. I believe that the improved drafting of certain clauses, the new clause and the provisions giving certain powers will make the council an effective organisation.

I do not greatly criticise the present consumers council which now operates under nationalisation but, over the years, I believe that it has become too involved in committees, in passing pieces of paper between groups, and so on. A change such as this gives us an opportunity to ensure that the Gas Consumers Council will use its powers and facilities to benefit consumers. I believe that, in practice, there will be no complaint about the manner in which the new Gas Consumers Council works, certainly with respect to the representation of industrial and domestic consumers.

One obvious objective of the Bill is to improve on the benefits of competition. For more than a century, certain aspects of competition were limited throughout the world, whether in the private or in the public sector. We have learnt from experience following the passage of the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Bill, which was introduced by my predecessor. We have made a number of changes in this legislation which will enhance the aims of that legislation.

During the Bill's passage, we announced the way in which we would endeavour to deal with the problems of imports and exports. There is a potential for further competition. Governments have to continue to take a basic look at the overall national scene. Under our import-export regime, British Gas will have to consult the Government of the day on any major imports it has in mind.

Likewise, if the monopoly position of British Gas was being used in a way detrimental to the development of the North sea, we have made it clear that an application for an export licence would obtain the appropriate waiver providing that the security of national supplies was not put in jeopardy as a result. Judging by the reception of the oil industry and other gas producers, this has been genuinely welcomed as an improvement on the existing situation while retaining the important oversight to ensure that no monopolies on the oil companies' side or on the British Gas side can operate in that respect against the national interest.

One interesting factor about the Bill has been the manner in which our original proposals to ensure that the British Gas contract market did not come into the regulation into which domestic gas will come has been clearly accepted by British commerce and industry as a whole. I remember that, when I argued on Second Reading that in my judgment it was to the benefit of competition and not to its detriment that this area remained free of detailed regulation, there was some anxiety on both sides of the House about that.

In Committee and on Report it was seen that not only major organisations like the CBI and the chambers of commerce, all of whom were carefully consulted before the Bill was drafted, but commerce and industry in general have remained well aware of the advantages that they enjoy from considerable competition in the industrial energy market. British Gas currently enjoys about 35 per cent. only of that market and is in fierce competition with electricity and oil. I believe that that competition is good, and the manner in which the Bill has been drafted means that, if ever British Gas moved to exploit some monopoly situation, it could be referred to the appropriate machinery and dealt with.

The expectation of British commerce and industry is very much that British Gas will find it in its vested interest to remain in a very competitive position in this respect. It remains true that the only strong representations that we have had in favour of regulating British Gas in this sphere of the market have been from its major competitors. On reflection, I think that we were right to include such a provision.

I think that the system of regulation that we have put in place will be effective and to the benefit of the domestic consumer. The consumer will benefit from reductions in the cost of raw materials, if they occur. The current expectation, looking at world oil markets, is that these will be taking place in years to come. I hasten to add that I do not necessarily share that prediction. One matter about which I have remained ardent in my time as Secretary of State for Energy is that I will never make any prediction of a future oil price. If any future Secretary of State for Energy decides to join in that game, I will consider that he has been badly advised. [HON. MEMBERS: "The Chancellor did."] The Chancellor made it clear that he was not making a prediction last week. He said that for the purpose of his figures he had to put in a price, but he made clear that that was in no way a prediction.

While many firms claim to be able to make such predictions, the only thing that they all have in common is that virtually always their forecasts are wrong. If the price of gas moves down, the formula that we have chosen will ensure that the consumer benefits therefrom.

The consumer will have a direct and immediate participation in the improved efficiency of British Gas over the years as new skills, technology and management techniques are applied. As a result, not only will the domestic consumer benefit in terms of price from the regulatory machinery mechanism but, under Governments of all persuasions, the formula will protect that market from Chancellors who have a desire to obtain revenue from that source, be they in a Labour Government, a Conservative Government or, maybe 100 years hence, even an alliance Government. It is a method of regulation that I think will be very much in the interests of the consumer. Therefore, from the point of view of consumer interest, improving competition and the industrial and domestic market, we argue that the Bill is well thought out and to the benefit of the nation.

We have recognised from the beginning of drafting the Bill the importance of maintaining high standards of safety. We not only examined the existing statutory requirements upon British Gas and ensured that they were all transferred to the new company but reviewed those requirements and made a certain number of amendments thereto. Although some mockery was made of changing the 24-hour rule to a 12-hour rule, this was never a gimmick. The management of British Gas, whoever are the managers, will know that nothing is more detrimental to its interests than suddenly acquiring a bad reputation on safety.

The reason why British Gas as a nationalised industry, for commercial motives as well as many others, has paid great attention to safety is that it has known that if, in competition with electricity, oil and other forms of energy, it ever obtained a reputation for being unsafe, it would lose its market share and its customers on a substantial scale.

In all the discussions with British Gas in drafting the Bill, we were at no time arguing with people who wanted either limitations or freedom on safety, we were arguing with people who had a long tradition of passion for safety, people who recognised that a reputation for safety in the private sector was in their commercial interests. Given the responsibilities of the Health and Safety Executive, the improvements that we have made and the quite important statutory improvement that in future British Gas will have a responsibility extending both sides of the meter, we have used the measure not to reduce safety but to improve it.

With regard to employees, I believe that the measure is in their interests in that at long last they can have a direct participation in their own industry. It is also in their interests that the industry will be free of the type of political and bureaucratic interferences from which nationalised industries of every description suffer from time to time. I sense that the employees of British Gas recognise that the measure will be to their advantage. I was pleased that the attempt of certain unions to get a ballot in favour of industrial action against privatisation did not succeed. This was because the employees of British Gas decided that it would not succeed. The ballot therefore went against those who were urging such a course. Irrespective of that, what is important is that the management of British Gas fully recognises that its future commercial success depends upon the actions and quality of the company's employees, and on the atmosphere and good team spirit that must continue in the industry.

I was amused to read recently the suggestion — I forget whether it was by a trade union leader or by a Labour party politician — that, if British Gas was privatised at some lower price and the assets revalued on a replacement cost basis, the result would be a loss to each British consumer of X hundred pounds. Neither consumers nor employees have received any great benefit from that valuation of the assets of British Gas. Now, for the first time, managers and employees of British Gas will have direct participation in the industry. To have direct participation in an industry to which one has devoted one's life is important. Neither employees nor consumers have ever felt a sense of participation.

I took my first faltering interest in politics in the 1945-50 period of the enthusiastic Labour Government nationalising everything and I think they genuinely felt that nationalisation would bring about consumer and employee participation. I am sure that in their quiet, silent moments, most members of the Labour party feel that their genuine aspirations did not materialise. Consumers soon realised that, as is evident from the experience of a certain enthusiastic Socialist professor who travelled to Plymouth without a ticket after the nationalisation of the railways. When he was fined by magistrates at Plymouth for doing so, he genuinely pleaded that he only went without a ticket because he assumed that he did not need one as the railways had been nationalised.

Whatever the merits and advantages or disadvantages of nationalisation, no one could argue that employees or consumers have felt a great sense of participation. The manner in which we intend to privatise the company and to see that employees and consumers are given an opportunity of direct participation will be a major social and economic factor. That is why we intend to pursue that policy with enthusiasm.

I suppose that this measure brings about the most major shift from the public sector to the private sector that has taken place in this country, or perhaps in any country. The gas industry is fundamental and has a great record of service to the people. It will be enhanced by being freed from the detailed examination and interference applied to it by Governments of every complexion. I have been guilty of interference, as have my Labour counterparts, throughout the period of nationalisation. If Government are the sole shareholder, they are responsible for a detailed examination of the industry without actually having the expertise, the knowledge or the know-how to do it well. If they had the expertise, it should be employed in the industry and not in an office in Whitehall.

I am delighted that the House has seen the Bill through its Second Reading and through a Committee stage in which debates were cogent and well argued, but in which we had the strength of the argument in those areas in which we defended our position. I rejoice that the Bill went through Report. Now it is before the House for Third Reading. I plead with the House to give a Third Reading to a Bill which will not only be of benefit to the employees and consumers of British Gas, domestic and industrial, but will create a major industrial manufacturing and distributive concern with a role to play at home and abroad, which it will be able to do with greater enthusiasm with its new freedom than it has been able to do since nationalisation took place.

4.40 pm

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): We welcome the Secretary of State back to the fray after 157 hours of silence. I do not know whether 25 March has anything to do with it, but I understand it is the Secretary of State's birthday. I only hope that the House does not give him a birthday present of the Third Reading of the Bill at the end of the debate.

British Gas is one of the most successful of British industries. It is a public monopoly, highly efficient, profitable, and expanding. The Government intend to turn it into a private monopoly without major competition and without the regulation safeguards which we have been advocating throughout the passage of the Bill. There is only one reason for the Government's actions—to sell off the industry on a once-for-all basis purely to raise capital to meet their election strategy.

On Second Reading, I said that there was nothing in the Bill that would improve efficiency or produce cheaper gas. That remains the case. In fact, after 157 hours in Standing Committee we are even more concerned about the future

[Mr. Stanley Orme]

of the British gas industry, the service to consumers and the rights of employees than we were at the outset. In Committee we sought to enshrine in the legislation rights for consumers and for employees which would at least maintain the present position, and in many cases improve it. We argued continuously that we were not living in a perfect world with British Gas and that improvements could be made under public ownership and a public monopoly. Therefore, we advocated many changes which would be beneficial to the industry, to the people who work in it and to the consumers who depend upon it.

The Government have not accepted any real changes to the Bill. They continue to assure us that the current relationship with consumers and employees will stand, but they refuse to ensure that that will be the case by writing it into the legislation. Several issues discussed in Committee still give cause for concern and are not adequately dealt with by the Bill or the authorisation. I make no apology for returning to those arguments today.

The rights of consumers are still badly met by the Bill, particularly those consumers who already have problems in paying for their fuel. As we stated in Committee, and on Report, we are extremely concerned about the abolition of regional gas consumer councils. Consumers' access to redress needs to be strengthened, not weakened, in the face of a private monopoly. Despite the Government's oft-stated belief that the rights of consumers will not be weakened, we cannot accept that. Without the necessary statutory obligation to ensure lay representation at regional level, the consumer protection offered will be anything but cut price. Conditions during this winter have increased the awareness of both the public and the politicians about fuel policy.

In Committee, the Opposition attempted repeatedly to write into the legislation protection for the poorest consumers—those in most need of fuel and those with the least ability to pay the ever-increasing costs of the fuel. The present code of practice on payment of bills provides some safeguards for those in difficulty. Condition 12 of the authorisation merely states that gas suppliers shall publish codes. We have tried to establish a statutory code with strict but reasonable guidelines for a public gas supplier and safeguards for gas consumers. We are specially worried that a private gas corporation will have rights of entry and of disconnection that at present exist for a publicly owned company. We are moving from a publicly owned company which is answerable to the House under the present legislation to British Gas plc which will not be answerable to the House.

The Under-Secretary told us in Committee that British Gas will continue the present code of practice. For the long-term good of the consumer, this must be strengthened by statute.

A further worry is the price of gas and the standing charges. The authorisation says that the gas corporation must use its best endeavours. We had a legal interpretation of that from the Under-Secretary, who is a solicitor. He made great play of the words "best endeavours". We said then that to use "best endeavours" to keep increases and standing charges below the rate of inflation was not sufficient. We have given the Government two opportunities to clarify this by making it clear in the Bill that standing charges shall not rise by more than the rate of inflation. Both opportunities have been rejected.

According to the Under-Secretary, "best endeavours" amounts to a clear obligation to ensure that standing charges do not increase above the annual retail prices index. If the intention is clear, why do the Government refuse to make it clearer and to allay the fears of consumers, especially the elderly? We know from our correspondence that consumers are not reassured by the Government's statements. Evidence from Age Concern to the Select Committee on Energy made that plain. Age Concern said:

> "Fuel costs and particularly the standing charge form a high proportion of the expenditure of elderly households, and unexpectedly high bills, service and repair charges are all a drain on the weekly income."

We know that consumers are worried about gas prices. They know that gas charges have risen too fast because the Government have used them to raise extra income, and one of the ways they have done that is through the gas levy. We have gone through the whole of the Bill—Second Reading, Committee and Report, and we have heard the Secretary of State move the Third Reading—and nothing has been said about the continuation of the gas levy. Since its inception, the gas levy has cost consumers £2 billion. Last year alone it was £504 million. That amounts to a surcharge of 4p per therm on gas.

Despite the assertion that the privatisation of British Gas will free the corporation from Government interference, the Government are to maintain the gas levy. This regressive tax is paid by the poorest consumers. The Bill is an opportunity for the Government to make a real difference to the many people whose fuel bills are a source of anxiety, and they can make that difference by removing the tax levy and reducing the price of gas. Again, the Government have rejected that opportunity. It is astonishing that, while the Government are prepared to assert that consumers will be no worse off, they are not prepared to ensure that that will be the case.

The Government have asserted that the network of gas showrooms and the services offered by British Gas to elderly and disabled consumers — such as free safety checks and the provision of special appliances — will continue. They probably will for the time being, but in Committee we sought an assurance that they would continue in the long term.

Mr. Michael Portillo (Enfield, Southgate): Is the right hon. Gentleman committing a future Labour Government to the abolition of the gas levy? Could he make that clear?

Mr. Orme: This Government introduced the gas levy. Without hesitation, we support the abolition of the gas levy. The only way to ensure the continuation of showrooms and services is to write into legislation obligations on the public gas supplier. Unfortunately, as on standing charges, we have been given only bland assurances, with nothing to back them up. The hon. Gentleman asked about the gas levy. It is odd that his right hon. Friend said nothing about it from beginning to end of this Bill, and he is not prepared to do so now. On every issue that we raised to strengthen consumers' rights—access to advice, information, redress and safety—the response from the Government has been the same. The Opposition remain unconvinced and so does the British public. It is still the case and nothing that has been said has contradicted it that the only people who will benefit from this massive sale will be the financial marketeers. Throughout the debates we have raised the issue of the market and what will happen.

It is unfortunate for this Government that the City has been under the spotlight in recent months. The public is increasingly aware that all is not well in the financial markets. While unemployment rises and poverty soars, people in the City are making vast profits from the sale of public assets. The Government's privatisation record is coming under heavy scrutiny and criticism.

The sale of British Telecom, the largest sale to date, must be our comparison for the proposed sale of British Gas. The Government have ignored the conclusions of the authoritative Public Accounts Committee report on the sale of BT. They have ignored criticism about their reliance on the advice of merchant bankers, and they have not said that the share price will not once again be undervalued. Despite the reservations of the Public Accounts Committee, the Government are going ahead with the appointment of overseas promoters for the sale of shares. In Japan, the United States and Switzerland, merchant banks are preparing to repeat the financial killing made in the BT flotation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I hope the right hon. Gentleman will not pursue that analogy too far. I think he knows that it is out of order on Third Reading of the Gas Bill.

Mr. Orme: This is part 2 of the Bill on the flotation of shares, and in Committee the Government used a comparison with British Telecom. I urge you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to accept that this is a valid comparison.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On Third Reading of a Bill we are required to confine ourselves to what is in that Bill. References to another piece of legislation are not in order.

Mr. Orme: Obviously, I accept your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I feel that we are putting forward a valid argument. No doubt we shall hear of the vast fees paid in commission to City firms. We shall hear about that after the event, and once again it will be the taxpayer who loses. We saw what happened in previous privatisations. For instance, £200 million was taken out by the City when BT was sold only a few months ago.

The Government have side-stepped the effect of the fall in oil prices on the flotation of British Gas. The Secretary of State referred to oil prices this afternoon, but we want to know what effect those falling oil prices might have on the sale. As we know, the *Financial Times* reports today that the oil price has now fallen to $12 a barrel. Many pundits believe that it will fall still further. With such a massive sale of public assets at stake, we have the right to know whether the Government have a strategy for dealing with that.

The public are becoming increasingly alarmed at the extent to which the Government are pursuing their privatisation programme. It has no theme or logic. The excuses for it keep changing. The latest is that it is an attempt to encourage people's capitalism. But only 6 per cent. of the population now own shares, and the responses to the Budget show that there will be no significant increase in that number.

The Secretary of State referred to safety, which he knows is a sensitive area. Throughout, we have raised no scare stories but have dealt with safety in a genuine manner because, in changing from a public to a private monopoly, we have a right to ensure that safety is up front in the industry. Throughout, we have sought crucial guarantees and assurances on safety in the industry. It is not sufficient to alter the call-up time. We must ensure that properly trained staff are available and that the Health and Safety Executive will be properly equipped. We are particularly concerned that the Health and Safety Executive will not be adequately staffed and will be unable to devote crucial time and attention to the supervision of safety in the industry.

We want a specific statement from the Minister about the future staff levels for gas safety in the Health and Safety Executive. As a result of information that we have received, we are worried that the Health and Safety Executive will not necessarily have adequate staff, and it is essential that it should. We want an assurance from the Government that there will be the facilities and the finance to provide such staff.

The Labour party believes that the British Gas Corporation belongs to the nation. As I said on Second Reading, under a Labour Government it will be returned to the public sector. That will be achieved in a way that is consistent with our other economic aims and priorities. We have made it clear that this privatisation has nothing to do with efficiency, profitability or competition. It is a major part of the Government's strategy for the next general election. Without the sale of British Gas, they would not be able to carry it out. It is an outrage that the corporation, which serves 16 million households, is to be used in that way.

We are fundamentally opposed to the Bill, and the British people will come to understand the magnitude of the Government's action. I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote against the Bill.

5.3 pm

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): As a former member of the Select Committee on Energy, I want to take this opportunity to welcome the privatisation of British Gas and to wish it well in the private sector. We have just heard all manner of accusations about the Government's motives in seeking this privatisation. But with the example of so many successful privatisations behind us, with so many industries prospering far more effectively in the private sector than ever they did under the control of the Civil Service, it is no longer theory but proven fact that industry does better in the private sector.

We are accused that this is part of our election strategy. Indeed it is part of our election strategy. This latest example of people's capitalism is an important step forward in developing a broadly based property-owning democracy in Britain upon which our future stability and prosperity as a nation depends.

The flotation of British Gas is a particularly important step because it will add sigificantly to the number of private shareholders, which, at 6 per cent. is far too small a proportion of our population compared not just to the United States but to other European countries, and it will add to the size, variety and vigour of the stock market.

The privatisation will be a splendid opportunity for the employees of British Gas to participate in a direct way in the success of their company. Their decision to vote down industrial action on the privatisation issue was in no small measure influenced by the fact this is a far more real and visible way for employees of enterprises to identify with those enterprises than the vague notions of national ownership which have long since been proved to be flawed and ineffective in practice.

[Mr. Spencer Batiste]

I hope, although there is not much evidence of it today, that in time the Labour party will come to accept the policy of privatisation, just as it is now being forced, by the weight of public opinion, to accept our related policy on home ownership.

The debate has been distinguished particularly by the positive and constructive role played by the Select Committee on Energy in its proceedings. The Select Committee has the resources to explore the detailed ramifications of complex Bills in a way that hon. Members on their own cannot. When there is substantial cross-party support on the Energy Select Committee, it behoves the Government to take the points at issue seriously.

One such point at issue is whether there should be in the Bill an obligation to promote energy conservation measures. On balance——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman heard my earlier rebuke. I hope that he will take it into account and confine himself to what is in the Bill.

Mr. Batiste: I am in no way seeking to propose any amendment or to add to the Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I merely wish to make the point that it was well expressed in Committee that the Bill should carry a clear message to the energy supply industry that energy conservation is important to the House and that if the warnings made during the Bill's passage through the House are not heeded, further legislation to promote the cause of energy efficiency will undoubtedly become necessary.

The major issues that we must now address are, first, those relating to the consumers' interest. The protection of the consumer is one of the most practically important issues that the Government have to face. In my area the North-Eastern gas consumers council has made many constructive suggestions. Inevitably there remain some matters that it and other councils will wish to see pressed in another place, but I congratulate the Government on listening to so many of the representations that have been made to them, and, most particularly, on broadening the remit and referral powers of the new Gas Consumers Council. That has been widely welcomed by all those who care about the gas industry's future, as compared to the Opposition, who seek only to make noise and to create spurious objection.

My next point is critically important. When a large organisation with such extensive market power as British Gas is moved into the private sector, there is the need to promote competition. Gas is competitive with other energy sources, but it is also important to encourage alternative gas suppliers if market forces are to operate effectively. I am delighted that the Government have accepted the amendment tabled in Committee to give the director general responsibility for promoting competition. There are those who would perhaps wish that we had gone further, but, in the final analysis, as we have seen with the privatisation of British Telecom, the vital factor is the calibre and the determination of the people chosen to operate the key watchdog roles.

This is a Third Reading debate as you have already reminded us on several occasions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so I shall be brief. Any Bill of this size and complexity, whose central purpose is so inimical to Labour's concept of state ownership, is undoubtedly capable of indefinite debate and much contrived indignation when finally the guillotine inevitably falls. The major issues have, I believe, been adequately aired and the Bill is in a reasonably acceptable form, though that need not preclude further adjustment in another place. This measure is a further important plank in our progress towards a property-owning democracy, and I commend the Bill to the House.

5.11 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): We have engaged in many hours of debate on the Bill, but we have not really arrived at a point very substantially different from that from which we set out. The Government have tried to justify the Bill as promoting greater efficiency and wider share ownership. Yet even the hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste), in spite of his eulogy of some abstract theory, acknowledged that there was not enough in the Bill on that issue. The Government have resisted amendments to promote energy efficiency on the spurious ground that it would be unfair to other energy suppliers. That was the basic argument used. I suggest now, as I did in Committee, that the easy way to resolve the matter is to charge all energy producers with responsibility to promote energy efficiency. I am sure that this is something that all parties would support.

Wider share ownership will be achieved, if it is achieved—there are some who feel that the widening of share ownership will be nothing like as great at the end as it looks at the beginning—at the expense of siphoning out of the financial institutions billions of pounds that could have been much better directed to stimulating new enterprise, wealth and jobs. It is really foolhardy of the Government to say that money cannot be taken out of the City for an enterprise such as this without taking it away from other enterprises which might need it more desperately.

Last week I challenged the Under-Secretary of State to say whether there were any market circumstances in which the Government would decide that it was sensible to postpone the flotation of British Gas. After all, they have done it with British Airways, presumably for commercial reasons. At that time, the Minister simply showed his discomforture in the normal way—by hurling a load of abuse at the alliance—but did not answer the question. I think that we are entitled to know whether the Government are determined to float British Gas this autumn, regardless of the market circumstances.

The Secretary of State acknowledged that in his Budget speech the Chancellor told us that he had assumed an oil price of $15. The Secretary of State said that this was not a forecast, but simply an assumption, and I accept that. But today, less than a full week since the Chancellor sat down, the oil price is under $12 and heading for less than $10. Leaving aside the fact that the fall in the oil price since this time last year and, indeed since six months ago, has wiped £5 billion off our net oil exports, will the Minister acknowledge that this has serious implications for the share price of British Gas, which had already been reduced by over £2 billion, according to analysts, even when the price of oil was $15?

I suggest that even if the Government were determined, in principle, to go ahead with privatisation, it would be irresponsible to do so in circumstances where the market is at the bottom of its price and the asset, which at the moment belongs to the nation, is likely to be substantially undervalued. We are entitled to know whether the Government have any views on that.

I shall press this point a little further by asking the Minister to say, when he replies, what valuation for British Gas is assumed in the Chancellor's forecast in the Budget statement that the receipts expected from privatisation in 1986-87 are £4·7 billion. What assumptions have been made about the percentage and value of British Gas included in that figure, and what implications does that have for the next Budget when coupled with the falling oil revenues?

Anyone who is buying shares will clearly have to consider these factors. If I were intending to buy shares in British Gas, which I am not, I would want to know what the future was. I would also want to know what scope there was under the Bill for British Gas, when privatised, to protect itself, as it will instinctively try to do. By protecting itself, I mean using its monopoly position to cushion itself against falling prices. The Government have not supported adequate measures to promote competition and, whatever their protests to the contrary, British Gas will continue to be to all intents and purposes the monopoly supplier of gas in this country. It will be able to abuse that monopoly to protect its position.

I shall give one or two examples. Will the price formula be flexible enough to allow the corporation to keep up prices, for example, to those domestic and commercial users who are committed to gas and have no alternative, while at the same time reducing prices to those industrial users who have made an investment by giving themselves flexibility and are therefore not so vulnerable to the British Gas monopoly? I suggest that private shareholders are likely to press a private gas corporation to take such action if it thinks it can get away with it. Will it be prepared to give incentives to new customers to come on to gas supply, to subsidise their capital investment and to charge that subsidy to existing users of gas? It is not clear from the legislation that the corporation would not be able to do that. Will the director general have the power that he needs to prevent such an appalling abuse?

Those questions have not, I believe, been answered, and I am certainly not satisfied that this is adequate consumer protection.

Mr. Walter Harrison (Wakefield): I am concerned about consumer protection. In fact, I implored my right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) who worked with me for years, to put a question for me in Committee about consumer protection. I should like to ask what protection there will be for the consumer, not on the tariff to be charged, but on the way in which tariff will be collected. Estimation is going on under the present gas boards. What protection will there be for the consumer in connection with estimated bills if the new gas authority refuses to read the meter and simply makes an estimate?

Mr. Bruce: In Committee we pressed for a code of practice, but were not successful in securing it. The Minister will no doubt answer the hon. Gentleman's question more fully.

Consumers and shareholders should be in no doubt that a future Government would be prepared to introduce amending legislation to prevent the sort of abuses that I have outlined. We would certainly be prepared to do so and to strengthen the powers of the director general to acquire the information needed to control such abuses. We would ensure that any information he acquired was published, that hearings were held in public, and that consumers or their representatives had the right to cross-examine. That is the kind of control, accountability and regulation for which we are looking but which the Government have denied us.

In these circumstances, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will not be surprised to hear that I and my colleagues are not satisfied with this legislation, even if we were not opposed to the principle in the first place, which we are. The import-export regime which the Government announced very late in Committee is something which shareholders need to take on board. I am not sure that they are really any the wiser about what the Government will do. I do not quarrel with what the Government have said. My only quarrel is over the fact that what was at the end of the day such a sensible decision could not be announced on Second Reading, but was left so late in the deliberations on the Bill.

We would be prepared, since it would be impossible, in my view, to renationalise British Gas even if the Labour party wished to do so, to introduce measures which would expose British Gas to more effective competition. In spite of statements from Labour Members, the Government have not taken the necessary measures to do this, and have not supported initiatives from their Benches either. We would be prepared to consider legislation to break British Gas up into regional companies, and we regret that this has not been properly debated, although the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson), and I put the argument on a number of occasions. The Labour party is intent on keeping British Gas as a central institution, because it hopes to be able to renationalise it and has refused to support us, and the Government have denounced the idea without intelligently arguing against its merits.

We shall make sure that the privilege of owning shares —it is a privilege—in a major utility, which will still be the monopoly supplier of gas, is not a licence to print money. It is reasonable for people to get a fair return. A fair return is one thing, but exploitation is another. None of these questions have been answered by the Government, and none of the assurances that we want have been given. In the light of that, my right hon. Friends and hon. Friends and I will join the Labour party in the Lobby against the Bill.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand that we have at the most 80 minutes left before the Front Bench speakers reply to the debate, and at least 10 right hon. and hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye. The arithmetic will be very obvious.

5.20 pm

Mr. Michael Portillo (Enfield, Southgate): The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) said that if funds were taken from the City for investment in British Gas, they would not be available for investment elsewhere in British industry. The hon. Gentleman showed that he had entirely missed the point of what is going on with the privatisation programme, which is that in the big issues like British Gas, and British Telecom before it, the Government have appealed to a source of finance that has never before been tapped — the ordinary man in the street investing in shares for the first time. The argument of the hon. Member for Gordon therefore falls flat on its face.

On Second Reading I welcomed the Bill in principle because I thought that privatisation would be good for

[Mr. Michael Portillo]

British Gas, good for its customers and employers and for the nation. However, I expressed some reservations about the Bill. Today, I have fewer reservations than I did, but I confess that some of them linger. At heart, my reservations are to do with whether the Bill establishes sufficient competition, and my thesis is that it is better to rely on competition to ensure the good of the customer than to rely on any kind of regulation, because competition would always do the job better for the customer.

I have three main concerns. The first is the competition that British Gas will face in obtaining gas supplies from the sources at which they are produced, in particular from the North sea. I wish to see British Gas having to bid against the competitors to win gas in the first place. Towards the end of the Committee, the Government made a statement about imports and exports of gas that clarified the position and gave us the basis that we needed to judge the Bill as a whole.

The Government statement was not exactly the statement for which I had been hoping, because I had hoped for an entirely free regime of imports and exports. Nevertheless, the statement was widely welcomed and was held to be a marked improvement on the previous position. In particular, it allows the Government to judge applications for the export of gas on a case-by-case basis. I wait to see how this will work out in practice.

I have two suggestions for the Government. First, will they make it clear that any company is as free as is British Gas to import gas, so that any other company can apply for imports? My second suggestion is that the Government should soon authorise an export of gas to demonstrate to British Gas that this is more than a theoretical possibility and that it can be carried out in practice, as that would have a dramatic effect on the way in which British Gas conducts its business.

My second concern was that the regulator should have a specific duty to promote competition in the supply of gas. Here, I am delighted to say that the Government graciously accepted my amendment, and I am pleased about that. It could prove crucial. I agree heartily with my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) that the important thing is the choice of person who will be the regulator. If the right person is chosen, as I am sure he will be, he will bear this duty in mind when applying it to a whole range of decisions — for example, in judging disputes that occur over the common carriage of gas by British Gas for third parties and on the supply of back-up gas from British Gas to private suppliers.

My third concern is about the prohibition of anti-competitive practices by British Gas. In Committee, I suggested specific prohibitions of anti-competitive practice—that was my first line of defence. My second line of defence was to oblige British Gas more clearly to spell out from where it derived its profits and where its costs would be spread among the various regional activities so that we can judge more accurately whether cross-subsidy was occurring. I failed to convince the Government or the Committee on this point, and my right hon. Friend the Minister in particular sought to rely on the Competition Act and the Fair Trading Act. He believed that there are sufficient powers available for all these concerns to be taken care of. I still have some doubts, but I hope that, in the fulness of time, I shall be proved wrong, and the Government right.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State often says that nationalisation requires Ministers and civil servants to run businesses, and they are unqualified to do so. That is the best shorthand reason for privatisation. Even where, after privatisation, the extent of competition is limited, pressure from shareholders, bankers and customers can be exerted much more effectively. One cannot mimic those forces while the company remains in the state sector.

I have a feeling that, in its heart of hearts, the Labour party is not as far from us on this as it would have us believe. I have a feeling that the Morrisonian ideals of nationalisation have, in practice, disappointed all of us. People do not feel that they own the British Gas Corporation, nor do the customers of British Gas feel that they are getting a high level of service because the employees in the industry feel that they are serving their fellow man and that they all own the industry in common. The employees of British Gas have lacked the incentive of competition, and it is that element that the Bill seeks to introduce.

I welcome the Bill now because I believe that it will help the customers of British Gas, its employees and the nation. To a large extent, some of these virtues have been recognised by the Labour party, although the Opposition spokesman, who spoke so charmingly in the Standing Committee, the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), went through the motions of opposing privatisation root and branch. In practice, Labour Members went through those lines rather as though they were speaking lines in a play, and not giving them tremendous conviction. It is a tremendous tribute to my right hon. Friend and the Government that they have argued and won the case for privatisation, and even convinced a number of Labour Members.

5.28 pm

Mr. Michael Cocks (Bristol, South): I apologise to the Secretary of State for not being here for his opening speech. The decision not to come into the Chamber was not inadvertent. I felt that, had I been here, my parliamentary courtesy would have been overridden, and I would have pointed out to him that his Third Reading speech was longer than his contributions in Committee.

I was surprised at the speech made by the hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste), because he branded himself as a parliamentary scavenger picking up fag ends. He was not even on the Committee, but he had to be here to speak before those of his colleagues who had served on the Committee had spoken, to make his Central Office points, which were hardly worth the occasion.

In Committee, I christened the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) the hon. Member for Enfield, Cold Feet. I did not intend to propagate that title, but, once again, he has shown himself to be running for cover, trying to play both ends against the middle and managing to ensure for himself some future reincarnation as an Opposition Front Bench spokesman.

The Bill puts me in mind of the old-style Western films where the main street, which is the subject of the film, was made up of elaborate sets—banks, hotels, and so on. There may have been an elaborate front, but behind it there were just a few props holding the whole edifice up, and there was no substance to the buildings. The Bill has been produced without the thorough-going research which was in hand and had borne fruit when the industry was nationalised.

The main point of reference in Committee was the Heyworth report, which is an analysis of the state of the gas industry at the end of the war with details of the number of undertakings throughout the country, their distribution, and the great pockets where there was no gas supply whatsoever. That was only one of several major studies which led to the nationalisation of the industry. However, the industry is being dismantled and put out to privatisation without any corresponding research.

Time and again in Committee we asked what estimates had been made by the Government and the Civil Service over various aspects of the Bill. Each time, when the verbiage was stripped away from the reply, the answer was nothing. Therefore, the Bill is based on inadequate research and thought and is really a doctrinaire measure to try to widen the base of the Government's appeal. It is the fulfilment of an election promise made without propper research. Indeed, when I pressed him, the Under-Secretary of State for Energy, although a former candidate for Bristol, South, did not realise that the Conservative party headquarters had been moved from Merrywood road to North street in Bedminster, the premises which were converted into Regal Amusements.

When we look at the provisions of the Bill, we are concerned about the inadequate guarantees about safety. It is important that during the debate we put it on record that we are by no means satisfied that the bland assurances that have been given about the privatised company will hold water in reality.

On Report I referred to the flexibility and quick response we now enjoy when we contact chairmen of the respective gas boards, and I gave a particular example. I am happy to tell the House that my confidence was reinforced when the matter that I had raised was dealt with within 24 hours. That is the sort of service that the Government are placing in jeopardy.

Therefore, while at this stage we cannot make any changes to the Bill before it goes to another place, I think it is important for us to place on record our fears and reservations about what might happen. God forbid that there should be a major disaster when the industry is privatised. If there is, I hope it will be recognised that the Opposition placed their reservations on record and that, if anybody is found wanting in the scrutiny and preparation of the Bill, it is the Government.

In view of your comments earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall conclude my remarks. I hope that in another place the reservations we now have about the provisions in the Bill concerning safety will receive further scrutiny, and that possibly, even at that late stage, the Government will make a concession which could give us at least some reassurance that note has been taken of all the representations.

5.34 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): I should like to make a short contribution taking account of the statistics you gave us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about time and the number of people wanting to speak.

I wish to welcome the Bill on Third Reading, having been through a long and contentious Committee. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) in endorsing the principle of privatisation and I believe that this Bill is an important step along that road. I should like to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on introducing the Bill and his colleagues for steering it through Committee. If it is proper, I should like to say a few words of congratulation to the Opposition on the way in which they showed us in Committee the knowledge they have of the Bill. They fought it hard, but in so doing, they showed that the Bill had been well thought out. The majority of points they were criticising were incorporated into the Bill in any case.

The two major points I should like to make are about competition and regulation. My hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) has already said that, if the competition were stronger, perhaps we would not have to have so much regulation. The Bill has been prepared in such a way that, wherever possible, notice has been taken of the need to encourage competition. The Bill is written to allow for competition from other gas companies should other companies ever be formed which could provide gas at domestic house level rather than just providing large tranches of gas through the common carrier. We know that the gas industry has been subject to competition for many years from other fuels, but that competition is always subject to price, the technology available in the industry using the other fuels and the availability of other fuels.

Gas is not the easiest commodity to bring into industry or domestic houses. Despite that, over the years the gas industry has been able to obtain 85 per cent. of the heating market in this country. That shows that the gas industry has been competitive in the past, and there is no reason to doubt that it will continue to be competitive in the future.

The Bill provides for other gas suppliers to use the common carrier system to supply gas to customers throughout the country. I expressed some reservations in Committee about how often the common carrier would be used, bearing in mind the fact that British Gas may be inclined to over-price the use of that facility. Even now, if there is surplus capacity on the common carrier, I believe that the charge for using it should be on a short-run, marginal cost basis.

We know that the gas industry was investigated by Deloitte, Haskins and Sells in June, 1983, and the achievements of the gas industry, which are recognised in this Bill, were stated in that report. It congratulated British Gas on the conversion from town gas to natural gas and the way in which British Gas has increased its market share over the years.

I should like to come to a point made by the right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks). Deloitte, Haskins and Sells also mentioned the fine safety record of British Gas and its proud industrial relations record. In my experience, the safety record in private industry is second to none. I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman has any need to fear that, because British Gas will be privatised, the safety record will in any way be less than it achieved as a nationalised industry.

The record of the industry is a credit to the executives who have run it in the past, the work force and the people throughout the whole of British Gas who have been involved — from connecting pipes and digging holes through to setting prices, marketing and running the whole organisation. It is also a credit to the sponsoring Department, the Department of Energy. I am sure that all those things will continue when British Gas is privatised.

The Director General of Gas Supply will be primarily responsible for regulation. From time to time, he will have to use the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, but in practice regulation will be his responsibility. He will, of

[Dr. Michael Clark]

course, work in conjunction with the Secretary of State for Energy. Indeed, I thank the Government for accepting in Committee an amendment that I and my hon. Friends put forward, whereby the relationship between the Director General of Gas Supply and the Secretary of State would be brought out into the open, so that we could know of the instructions and communications that passed between them when regulating that large privatised gas concern.

In the Bill, the Director General of Gas Supply is required to encourage competition, to be unbiased towards British Gas—it must ensure that it is fair in its dealings with all gas suppliers — and be customer-oriented. Moreover, under clause 33, the director general must ensure that gas is continuously available to gas users. There is a danger that there will be a gap in the supply of gas in the early 1990s, but I am sure that the director general will take that into account.

The main regulator used by the Director General of Gas Supply will be price. The price is being fixed by a formula which is now well known. It seems complicated, but careful study reveals it to be not too bad at all — *[Interruption]*. The formula is

$(RPI-X)+Y+K$.

It is not too difficult at all. But price control alone will not encourage profit levels to be kept at the low level required if the consumer is to get a fair deal. Therefore, I feel that the director general, working within the Bill's terms of reference, will want to consider publishing the profits made by British Gas. The information could be used for control of the organisation. It could also be used to judge how the formula should be reviewed in 1992, and could show that there was not excess cross-subsidisation between the various parts of a privatised British Gas.

When price alone is used as the regulator, we must ensure that it does not hide windfall profits that might arise through the price of other energy sources rising faster than the price of gas, causing gas to be used more than those other energy sources. That can only be checked by having some knowledge of the profits made. I am confident that, in the short term, the director general will control and regulate effectively. In the longer term, regulation will be reviewed by the Secretary of State. However, I am sure that we shall have a thriving and most acceptable privatised gas industry, and I and my constituents look forward to the issue of British Gas shares later this year. Indeed, many of my constituents have told me that they want to buy those shares. This whole venture represents one more step in the promotion of popular capitalism which has so caught the imagination of this country.

5.43 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): We have just heard two very convoluted speeches from Conservatives Members. On the one hand they ask for market forces and competition to be allowed their head, and on the other they want the regulator to have more powers to regulate the industry, once privatised. I am not sure what they really want, or what they are pursuing in their dream of privatisation.

But it is certain that the Secretary of State did not come clean today about the real reasons for privatisation. We have not heard from Conservative Members, including the hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) who is just about to leave the Chamber, what those reasons are. Indeed, during the hon. Gentleman's flight of fantasy, he paid tribute to the fact that the Government had paid attention to the Select Committee's views. I am sorry to disappoint him, but the Government ignored the Select Committee's views to the extent that they introduced the Bill and put it into Committee when they know that the Select Committee's report would be published. The Government completely ignored that report. I am sorry to deflate the hon. Gentleman's ego over his membership of that Select Committee, but the Government clearly do not think much of the Select Committee's recommendations. They even ignore the Public Accounts Committee, of which I am a member, when it tells them, time and again, that they are ripping off the public by privatising our state industries.

The Secretary of State did not give the real reasons for privatisation because he will not stand up publicly and admit that it is a rip-off. The fact that privatisation is a rip-off can be demonstrated quite easily by considering the seven main industries that have been privatised. It is clear that they could have been sold for almost £2 billion more than was achieved in their flotations. However, we shall return to that point later.

I am amazed by the hypocrisy of Conservative Members. They pay tribute to British Gas as it now exists, to the workers and its organisation, and then say that they want to sell it. Why do they want to sell such a large industry, which is very profitable? It provides about £500 million a year through the gas levy and makes profits of about £1·5 billion. Why do Conservative Members want to sell it? It needs to be sold solely to line the pockets of their City friends. For example, their stockbroker friends will gain about £300 million.

The hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) is yawning. Perhaps he does not want to be party to this charade. Oddly enough, he opposed the Government at certain points in Committee. He did not have the courage to vote against the Government. At some stage, the Minister would say that he would look at the matter, and the hon. Gentleman would back off. Indeed, the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) and other hon. Members were told by Government Whips to back off in Committee, although they knew that certain parts of the Bill were nonsense.

The hon. Member for Elmet said that private industry was better than public industry. I wish that that was so, and that the history of nationalisation in Britain showed that Labour Governments had taken profitable industries into public ownership. But the history of nationalisation in this country shows that the Labour party has had to take into public ownership corrupt and badly run private industries in order to protect jobs and our economic structure. That is why we had to nationalise the coal, car and aerospace industries. We did so not because of any blind dogma or ideology — unlike the Conservative Government — but because those industries were bankrupt, and we wanted to protect the many jobs involved.

The Government do not care about the jobs of those involved. They will talk about them, but when it comes to the crunch, they do not care. Their justification for provisions affecting consumers and safety is always that market forces and competition will right any wrongs. I believe that the Government are wrong. Throughout the Committee stage the Government argued that all would be the same after vesting day. The argument is that British Gas plc will be a marvellous private company because the public corporation is a good and profitable company.

That does not follow. British Gas exists to provide this country with cheap, clean fuel and to contribute to the general economy of the country in the public interest. The motive of British Gas plc—the reason for its existence as a private company—will be to make a profit. The possibility of the public interest being a major feature in any decision made by the company will go by the board. In no private company in this country, when decisions are being made in the board room, does anyone ask, "Do we make a profit, or do we act in the public interest?" With relatively small companies that is OK, although I do not think that we can afford them. Many decisions are made in private companies on the basis of the pursuit of profit rather than the public interest. We can swallow that.

However, we are now talking about a major industry. The present-day value of the industry is about £17,000 million. Last year there was a profit of well over £1 billion, and there was also the gas levy of £504 million. The rate of return on assets was 25 per cent. Ninety three thousand people work for the company and over a quarter of a million are employed in providing services and equipment. British Gas is not a little back-street operation in which private interest can be permitted to be the dominant feature and the money boys to make their cash; it is a major enterprise. If this major industry is badly handled in the private sector, the effect will be enormous.

I am quite sure that British Gas plc will not deliberately break safety standards. However, neither did Union Carbide in Bhopal, and neither did the private coal companies, when under private enterprise they killed 53,000 people.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): Disgraceful. We are talking about British Gas.

Mr. Rogers: It is all very well for the Minister to scoff at what I say, but that is what happened in the pursuit of profits. Many decisions were made in coal mines that caused the death of miners. I can provide chapter and verse. One need only to go to the Library to see how many of my constituents—and indeed some members of my family—suffered as a result of the mindless pursuit of profit in the coal mines.

It will not happen deliberately, but if there is a sin of omission rather than a sin of commission, it will be a great sin. The Government had the opportunity to put some statutory safety requirements in the Bill. They could have tightened up on safety. It is no good the Government saying that the matter has been covered in the same way as it was in the case of British Telecom. As I said in Committee, telephones do not blow up but gas installations can. Unless the highest standards are maintained there may be tragedies, as there have been in the past. No one will have designed those tragedies—accidents are accidents—but it is incumbent on us as legislators to ensure that the possibilities of accidents are restricted.

Constraints of time prevent us from taking up some major issues that were not fully developed in Committee. Great problems will arise. There is the issue of competition. What will happen to an organisation with a built-in infrastructure? There are pricing policies, market development, tarrification and resource development. What is to stop British Gas plc investing in villas in Spain or north Africa rather than ensuring adequate future resources and development in the North sea, or in the development of liquefaction and gasification processes so that we can import from other parts of the world when North sea gas runs out? Those are all aspects of a big unknown. With the privatisation of the gas industry, we are taking an awful step into the unknown.

5.58 pm

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): The Bill has been improved since Second Reading, although not as much as I would have liked. My hon. Friends the Members for Elmet (Mr. Batiste), for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) and for Rochford (Dr. Clark) have eloquently outlined some of the matters that still concern us. However, I believe that the Bill has improved enough to be given a Third Reading tonight and a fair wind. I hope that when the Bill reaches another place the Government will be obliged to reconsider some of those important matters, especially those to which the Select Committee drew attention. The Bill may then be improved still further.

Part II covers the sale of shares to the public. I am very concerned that the Government's privatisation programme should not be discredited. I believe that it is fundamental to our future, to the economic strategy and to the improvement of our performance that the privatisation programme should succeed and that it should not be damaged by criticisms such as were made by the Public Accounts Committee of some of the previous public sales.

We might as well be honest and admit that in the Government's eagerness to sell other nationalised industries, miscalculations and misjudgments were made. We want to avoid any criticisms in connection with this sale. We must ensure that there is no repetition of what took place when, during the speculation, some in the City made far too easy profits.

I hope that when part II is applied and the shares are sold, the Government will provide a genuine opportunity for the small investors, and especially the employees of British Gas, to have not just the first but the juiciest bite. I believe that many of my colleagues would, like me, be most disappointed if there were to be a undignified stampede of speculative stags, as with some previous privatisations. That would seriously damage the whole concept of wider share ownership and the privatisation programme.

Every sale—especially a large one—must provide a tempting discount on what experts regard as the market price. It is therefore especially important that if there is to be a discount on the market price that discount should go primarily to the employees of the company and to the small shareholders—in other words, the customers—rather than to underwriters and to overseas institutions, as has happened in the past. It is most important that the offer for sale should be organised on such a basis that the majority of the shares go to employees and to small shareholders rather than the larger investors.

I have one suggestion which I hope my right hon. Friend will consider. I hope that this proposal will enable the Government to overcome the embarrassments of previous sales, which had to be priced on an arbitrary basis—always difficult if not impossible—with the result that there was a large premium and the taxpayer was deprived of a fair proportion of the revenue. A different form of pricing was required.

Is it really necessary that all the shares should be sold on the same day? Why cannot the offer for sale be on a

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open-ended basis, in the same way as the Government sell gilt edged on tap and in the same way as the Govenment sold their BP shares in tranches? Why cannot the first tranche be worth only £1 billion—10 per cent. or 20 per cent. of British Gas shares — in order to establish a market price?

The first tranche could be allocated primarily to small applicants, in the same way as British Telecom shares were allocated to small applicants and employees. If a premium developed, as it is bound to develop, the bulk of the benefit would still be in the hands of the Government. The rest of the stock could then be sold on a tap basis, on rising prices. As demand developed, the Government's nominated brokers for the sale could subsequently sell, on rising prices, to the large investors and to the institutions the bulk of the issue, once a market price had been established from which the small investors would benefit.

What is the rationale of obliging all the stock to be sold in one indigestible gulp? If it were sold in tranches, would it not make the huge cost of the underwriting unnecessary and would it not provide a fairer total value for the taxpayer without depriving the small shareholder of a fair investment?

Furthermore, would it not reduce the risk of having to price the issue at the wrong price? Only a small proportion of the issue would be offered for sale at the initial launch. If the price of the 10 per cent. or 20 per cent. that was offered for sale was too low, at least the Government would not be subjected to the sort of criticisms to which they would be subjected if the price were too low and everything was sold on that day.

As the initial tranche that was offered for sale would be allocated primarily to small applicants and to employees, because they would be given priority, it would ensure the Government's objective of promoting wider share ownership. The first tranche at the lowest price would go to those who ought to have the shares—employees and small shareholders. Subsequent sales on a tap basis would mean that whatever stock was then available would be sold at the genuine market price, which would probably be a higher price, to the larger investor.

I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy to consider this type of package if he wants to avoid further criticism of a privatisation issue on a large scale depriving the taxpayer of the full benefit of the sale and not ensuring that the small investor gets a fair deal.

6.2 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): My right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) raised a very important issue at the beginning of the debate. He referred to the fact that several issues have not been dealt with adequately during the proceedings on the Bill. The Opposition are still concerned about health and safety. We are not sure that the Health and Safety Executive will be able to police this private monopoly with the care that is needed.

The factory inspectorate is 35 per cent. below the recommended staffing levels that were accepted by this Government in 1979. If the safety aspects of the Bill are to be enforced, the Government must provide the resources to back them up. My right hon. Friend today asked for those assurances, and we shall not be satisfied if they are not given this evening. We have not been persuaded by Ministers that the Health and Safety Executive will be able, with its present staffing levels, to carry out the increased responsibilities that are being laid upon it by the Government. In fact, the opposite is the case.

Since 1979 the Health and Safety Executive has been given more work to do but has been provided with fewer resources with which to do it. Its field force has been cut by over 25 per cent. However, since 1979 it has been given additional responsibilities. It has to enforce new regulations which are more time-consuming to enforce than the old regulations. In 1974, the inspectors were expected to carry out the inspection of 240,000 premises. By 1984, they were expected to carry out the inspection of 800,000 premises, although their numbers had decreased. They are able to visit some premises only once a year. They are able to visit other premises only once every 10 years. How will the Government ensure, therefore, that the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 is extended in order further to protect the public unless the strength of the Health and Safety Executive is greatly increased?

Those who work for the Health and Safety Executive are at the end of their tether. They cannot cope now with basic inspections and they have to abandon potential risks that would have been a very high priority only a few years ago. In 1981, when gas safety was the responsibility of the Department of Energy, there were 30 prosecutions. Since the Health and Safety Executive has taken over that responsibility, there have been only two prosecutions. That is not an indictment of the inspectors. They cannot accept further responsibilities without an increase in their numbers.

The Chief Inspector of Factories has issued guidance to the inspectors. He tells them not to keep a low profile but he expects his instructions to be maintained. They are to minimise the heavy burdens that could be placed on the resources of the Health and Safety Executive. The 530 factory inspectors operating in the field will have all these new responsibilities placed upon them. The Government want to give them even more responsibilities. Is that a responsible approach to a difficult problem? Any objective observer would say that it is not.

The answer is not to abolish the laws on health and safety, as Lord Young of Graffham has promised. We have yet to receive an assurance that that proposal is not to be taken seriously. At the very least, the staff of the Health and Safety Executive should be increased by about 50 per cent. That was promised by a Conservative Government. In the light of the anxiety about safety that we have expressed throughout the proceedings on the Bill, we hope that the Government will initiate moves that will ensure such an increase.

The Secretary of State for Energy told us this afternoon that the employees are being promised direct participation in their industry. However, according to a TUC report that was published this week, privatisation has led to fewer jobs and worse terms and conditions of employment. How can the Government claim, therefore, that the employees will be better off? The TUC says that there has been significant job shedding in companies that have been privatised or in companies that are candidates for privatisation. Associated British Ports has cut its work force by about one fifth. British Aerospace has lost 10,000 jobs since privatisation. Cable and Wireless shed one fifth of its United Kingdom staff in the year after privatisation.

British Telecom has embarked on a staff cutback. The report shows that industrial relations and union facilities have become worse.

This provides a warning to employees in the gas industry and in other industries where privatisation is threatened. Free shares and other inducements are no substitute for adequate rights and conditions of work or, indeed, for the loss of jobs.

6.8 pm

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): When I spoke during the Second Reading debate on the Bill I acknowledged that this could put me at the mercy of the Chairman of the Committee of Selection. By that time it had begun to leak out that members of the Opposition were, for some reason better known to themselves, affecting ignorance of the many virtues of the Bill and that the Committee stage could last longer than the piece of legislation which I was invited to consider this morning. The Professions Supplementary to Medicine (Winding up of Remedial Gymnasts Board) Order of Council 1986, the proceedings on which lasted from 10.30 am to 10.31 am. The reason I exposed myself to these dangers was the fact that the Bill is one of a limited number of Bills dealt with by this House since I entered in 1983 on which I can express unreserved approval.

I sought to catch your eye, Mr Deputy Speaker, not only for the opportunity to wish the Secretary of State and the Opposition Whip a happy birthday but to express to the House that, during the past few weeks since the Second Reading debate, it has become clear to me that there are no reasons why British Gas should stay in public ownership — whether on the grounds of safety or the interests of the employees or the consumer.

When one considers the history of British industry one cannot pretend that there are any benefits flowing from public ownership, especially within our economy. Rather than benefits we have witnessed a long series of cases of decay, inefficiency, lack of positive management, terrible industrial relations, subsidies and interference from politicians. No one is criticising the current management of British Gas or indeed, criticising the work force, 500 of whom work in my constituency. No one will claim that there will be a sudden, overnight transformation in the fortunes of British Gas.

We believe, however, that British Gas, in private hands, will attract new dynamic management — it will be controlled by people who are qualified to control major commercial enterprises and not by politicians or civil servants who are clearly not qualified to do so—and it will offer wide employee participation with its attendant benefits.

The Bill is not about lining the pockets of the City as has been claimed, nor is it about adding lustre to the Chancellor's Budget. The Bill is meant to ensure that gas continues to be supplied to British industry and to the British people as efficiently as possible and at the most competitive price. We shall, therefore be able to take the fullest advantage of the energy resources available to us.

6.12 pm

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I am rather flabbergasted by that last contribution to our proceedings. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) did not grace our Committee with speeches of a similar nature. I think that he found some difficulty in putting to the House reasons why the Bill will be acceptable.

The Bill is not paltry, as it represents the privatisation of a huge corporation. The arguments which must be addressed to the Bill go further than the simple issue of privatisation. I take up the challenge which the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) made to the Minister and the Government when he said that they should look carefully at the way in which British Gas is to be put on to the market. Frankly, it is a scandal that over the past couple of years huge amounts of public cash have been virtually given away by the lack of adequate pricing of shares.

The hon. Member for Erewash made his contribution and quite wisely departed, but I think that he failed to take into account the reason why British Gas is being privatised in one unit and a huge dollop of shares will be put on the market at the same time. The answer is simple, and I do not think the Government will honestly try to deny it. The Government need the £5 billion, or whatever will be achieved, by the sale of the shares for the next Budget and for the general election. That political priority has blinded the Government to some of the other changes which were necessary in the legislation.

One of the serious failings of the legislation is the lack of provision for proper tight and tough regulations and a competition policy. We should have had one or the other, but, during the course of the Bill, we have achieved neither. The regulations are weak, and, as the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) rightly said, must be tightened up. There is no prospect of any competition from other supply companies.

One has only to consider the way in which the oil companies have slammed the door in the Chancellor's face to understand the lack of influence that the Government will have once the ownership of this huge monopoly passes into the private sector. I am concerned about pricing and the supply of gas, because overall production is not sound. We will lose along the way on the purchase of equipment.

My main objection to the legislation is the centralisation that it entails. The Scottish Council Development and Industry has sent all Scottish Members — the remarks are especially addressed to their Lordships in another place — a further document in which it draws attention to the need to tackle the centralisation issue. It states:

"privatisation plans should involve efficient service to consumers and management of resources in Scotland. The Council believes that the optimum development of the business is best achieved with devolved management. Even the existing level of devolved management is not secured by the Bill."

I find it interesting that hon. Members and members of the Select Committee who have addressed us this evening have bypassed or even debased their position as elected Members of this House. They have said that there are serious defects but that they are prepared to give the Bill a Third Reading so that the unelected House—the one which exists by patronage of succession—will be able to do a job which they do not have the political courage to carry out. That is a commentary on the way in which we run our affairs.

The Government have made serious mistakes with the Bill. They have been driven to this measure on a timetable that has been far too fast. They have adopted a structure that will be dangerous and damaging because of the level

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of centralisation, and they have failed to look after the interests and safety of consumers. They have done this for party political reasons — to win, or in the hope of winning, the next election. Over the past four months we have been debating privatisation. I venture to suggest that once this huge private monopoly is in force, within four or five years we will be debating the need to break it up, in the same way as the American telephone system was broken up.

The Labour party has made a mistake in assuming that it is better to keep the private monopoly in one unit for the purpose of nationalisation. The Labour party is taking a gamble—whether it will be able to afford to take over the monopoly, or indeed whether it will be in government at the next election. I had hoped that the Labour party would recognise the need for adequate decentralisation. Unfortunately, the Government have refused to admit that basic principle. At the end of the day, Conservative Members, who at one time were dedicated to competition, will feel that they have betrayed the interests and long-standing philosophy of their own party.

6.18 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): The House and the country are fully aware of what the Bill is all about. It is not about efficiency and consumer protection; it is about political dogma. It is concerned with attracting finance for the Government and winning votes at the next election. The Government hope to achieve that by using this vast amount of money to reduce taxes and to kid the electorate that they have fulfilled their election manifesto. It is purely and simply political dogma.

The Government are selling off the nation's assets, as has been said time and again, at a price well below market value. To use a popular cliché, they are selling £10 notes for £5. That is what will happen. It is an absolute scandal that the nation's assets can be sold off in this way.

All hon. Members are aware that the Bill allows 15 per cent. of the total assets to be purchased by people abroad. That may not appear to be a large percentage. Although I would not care to put a specific figure on it, it could amount to £1,000 million. Therefore, British Gas could be owned by people abroad to the extent of £1,000 million. If the Conservative Government are prepared to do that purely and simply to fulfil their political dogma, the British public will undoubtedly have taken note of it.

The Bill has proceeded with indecent haste in Committee and on Report. We all know what happened in the early days, but I am concerned about the Government's complete disregard of the Select Committee's recommendations. The Select Committee considered the Bill at length and in depth and made unanimous recommendations, although it has a built-in Conservative majority. That has proved to me that the Government have no regard for the work of Select Committees.

Conservative members of that Select Committee must face the biggest embarrassment. On 13 March a headline in *The Guardian* declared that the report stage would be unique because every member bar one of the Select Committee had signed amendments which would embarrass the Government. Indeed, we all looked forward to that unique occasion. It was the first time that a Select Committee had tabled amendments to a major Bill. We looked forward to the courage of those hon. Members who signed the amendments, but what did we find? The evening when the Chairman of the Select Committee moved the amendments, only one Conservative member of the Select Committee, the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost), had the courage to vote. Apart from the hon. Gentleman and the Chairman, none of the other Select Committee members had even the decency to come to the Chamber and listen. They have done a great disservice to Select Committees.

We have always been aware of the Government's attitude. Indeed, the Secretary of State went on record a few weeks ago saying what he thinks about Back-Bench interference in Select Committees. He is shaking his head now, but that was widely reported. Those Conservative Members who supported the Select Committee's recommendations and signed the amendments have done a great disservice to Select Committee procedures. They have become a myth. If "hypocrisy" were not an unparliamentary word, I would probably use it.

I fully concede that the amendment about competition by the director general is welcome, although it could have gone further. The name of the organisation was changed to the Gas Consumers Council, but other amendments have been only minor. Indeed, the Bill remains almost as it began, and obviously that was the Committee's intention.

Many outstanding aspects are still to be dealt with, and we can only hope that they will be dealt with in another place. There is the problem of standing charges. We have heard constantly about "best endeavours". The Secretary of State and the Minister have given us assurances about that phrase. If "best endeavours" is legally binding, why do they not make it a statutory responsibility under the Bill? That would not be a hardship. People are not confident that that phrase is legally binding. The Secretary of State in his evidence to the Select Committee said that he was worried about that aspect, and that, as far as he understood it, as a layman, it was hard lines if one could not cope. For the life of me, I cannot understand why the Government will not accept that "best endeavours" should be a statutory responsibility. I hope that the Government will also give further consideration to codes of practice.

The Government continue their programme of selling the nation's assets. It means wealth for their supporters, and many of their supporters had better support the Tory party with contributions during the election campaign.

6.25 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): I am pleased to have this final opportunity on Third Reading to speak against the Bill. Some Conservative Members seem to be under the illusion that we in the Labour party are not fully opposed to the privatisation of British Gas. We must make it clear that they are 100 per cent. wrong, that we are 100 per cent. committed to the public ownership of British Gas, and 100 per cent. opposed to the Bill.

However, I agree with one statement made by the Secretary of State in his opening speech. He referred to the present form of public ownership perhaps not having lived up to what some people expected it to achieve in 1945. I accept that in 1986 we may well need to consider certain differences when the Labour Government take organisations back into public ownership. We need to ensure, for example, that the industry is far more involved in and better serves both consumers and employees, as well as the nation, than it may have appeared to do in the past.

We must convince the electorate that we are not in favour of public ownership and opposed to privatisation, such as this, purely because of dogma, but because it is in the nation's best interests as we can use the industry to the nation's best advantage through public ownership.

The Bill is not in the nation's interest. The nation will suffer when the Bill receives its Third Reading, approval in the other place and, ultimately, Royal Assent. The Government are selling the industry to fulfil their political dogma and because they need money to finance either public expenditure before the general election or tax cuts. Whichever they choose, they can use the proceeds from British Gas only once. One can use an asset only once. The Government have repeatedly failed to tell the nation and the House that, and to say what they will do to close the gap of the £1·5 billion profit which British Gas at present makes for the nation. It is perfectly proper, fair and reasonable that a profitable public industry should be allowed to use that profit to subsidise some aspect of public service that can never run at a profit. I have no objection to that type of cross-subsidy. If that is Socialism and public ownership, I am proud to stand for it. I look forward to the day when we have a Government which will take this important industry back into public ownership.

It is true that the Government's policy on gas nationalisation is aimed at short-term financial gain and that that policy is long-term financial folly and nonsense. This Government, who pride themselves on being the economists and financiers of the world, should recognise that their policy is nonsense and not in the interests of the nation.

The Government gave no account to the Standing Committee of the amount that they expected to receive from this biggest ever sale of a publicly owned industry. It is almost certain that we will not get the true value for it. If recent privatisations are anything to go by, the people who will make the money will be the financiers in the City and the friends of the Conservative Government. The people whom the Government represent will not benefit.

The Bill is not in the national energy interests of this country. Energy is so important and fundamental to the nation that it should be controlled by the Government. It should therefore remain under public control and should not be in private hands. A publicly owned energy industry should pursue policies of conservation and develop new fields. These policies will suffer once the Bill receives the Royal Assent. British Gas has a vital role to play in developing substitute natural gas supplies which will be essential in the next century when the natural gas in the North sea and the Irish sea runs out. We will need substitute sources of supply, and they should be provided by an organisation under public control, not in the private sector.

The Government have said several times that they need to remove the shackles from the industry. They believe that the Bill will do that. However, this Government have actually imposed more shackles on publicly owned industries than any other Government. The Government have said that British Gas must sell the Wytch Farm oilfield and that British Gas could not buy Sleipner gas. There are many other examples of how the Government have shackled the industry—for example, through the gas levy.

If the Government believed that management and the control of British Gas had been too restrictive and that there had been too much interference by the Government —if one accepts that that argument is true—they could have removed the restrictions. They could have done that without having a Bill for privatisation and by giving more freedom to British Gas.

In Committee, the Government repeatedly praised the record of British Gas. However, one wonders why they now need to put that industry into private ownership, especially if the industry has served the nation so well. I would certainly support 100 per cent. the idea that the industry has served the nation well.

The Bill is detrimental to the consumer. Although an important amendment was moved by the Government on Report, in the face of considerable pressure by my hon. Friends in Committee, we are still very anxious about the Bill. We believe that profit will become more important than service, that showrooms will be under threat and that corners will be cut. The Secretary of State said in his opening speech that he believed that commercial judgments would force the new owners of British Gas to conform to the levels of safety to which I have referred. Although I accept that that is likely to be true, there is no reason why amendments on safety aspects should not be in the Bill, to ensure that such measures are carried out.

We have ended up with a bad Bill, and I hope that hon. Members will vote against it. I look forward to the day when British Gas is taken back into public ownership.

6.34 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) over the way in which he disposed of the charge that the Opposition were not 100 per cent. opposed to this deplorable Bill. The Secretary of State tried to launch that idea at the beginning of the debate when he offered the House his contribution, which was a mixture of urbanity and arrogance. He seemed, in his birthday euphoria, to be enjoying not having the discomfiture of his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the problems that that right hon. Gentleman faces.

The Secretary of State suggested that the Bill had been thoroughly prepared and carefully worked out. He proved that this was the case by his claim that there were so few amendments. He may find that some of the amendments that my right hon. and hon. Friends and I tabled might have improved the Bill. Had the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) been a member of the Standing Committee, he might well have supported some of the Opposition amendments. I believe that in some mild way his was the only sane and sensible contribution that we have heard from the Government Benches today.

As I have said, there was only a very minor word of sanity from the Tory Benches in the contribution from the hon. Member for Erewash. Quite frankly, some of the speeches from Tory Members this evening have been deplorable. They have clearly overlooked a number of points that Opposition Members made in Committee. Tory Members seemed to imagine that the Opposition will be somewhere in the queue behind them when privatisation takes place.

We know why Tory Members are here today and interested in the Bill. I am only sorry that the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) received a shock to his system when he discovered on joining the Standing Committee that the Committee was not going to last for only a minute or so.

[Mr. Peter Hardy]

In the short time that I have available, my task is to summarise the main objections to the Bill and the principal points that my hon. Friends have made. Basically, the Opposition regard the Bill, whatever view one may take of the quality of our opposition to it, as a dogmatic assertion of irresponsibility and a profligate approach to a great public asset.

The Secretary of State suggested that, because people were not joining in fervent opposition to the Bill and because people had not become passionately attached to the idea of community involvement, somehow the Morrisonian concept had failed. However, if one looks at the way in which British Gas has become perhaps the greatest single industry or commercial organisation in Britain and one of the most successful in Europe if not in the world, it is evident that with good management and proper industrial relations public ownership can make an enormous contribution to the national good. The Opposition have real reservations as to whether the privatised British Gas will make the same contribution to the British economy or to our record of commercial success — a success that is rapidly eluding the Government.

My hon. Friends have offered detailed criticism of the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) showed how the profit motive, without adequate control, can lead to appalling risk. In the debate we have stressed on several occasions that we are anxious about safety. We have not, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) said, tried to start scare stories about safety. However, we are entitled to express reservations about the safety factor.

I know that from time to time the Secretary of State became somewhat restive when we stressed our concern about safety, but that concern remains. My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) pursued that matter in Standing Committee and stressed that if the Health and Safety Executive is to fulfil its responsibilities with regard to gas safety, it will have to receive a greater commitment and larger resources. We were not reassured when the Minister of State said that there had been a substantial upsurge and growth in the Health and Safety Executive, as it transpired that that "upsurge" was from 1,266 people to 1,242. That arithmetical presentation did not give us much confidence about the Government's commitment to safety.

We remain concerned about inadequate provision for the consumer. One representative per region is not enough. I hope that our anxieties about this aspect will be firmly expressed in the other place. I imagine that some Members of the other place who are worried about the regions will not give great joy to the Government.

The hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) offered us a reassurance about the formula. We were not reassured when the Government produced that appalling, complicated numerical gobbledegook. My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) had to explain it to the Committee. He is a historian. The hon. Member for Rochford had to wait until Third Reading to tell us that it was all clear and concise. How many gas consumers are seriously impressed by the formula that the hon. Member for Rochford now finds so attractive?

The regulator does not have sufficient powers, esteem or standing. I believe that, during this debate, some Conservative Members began to move towards that view. There is certainly cause for concern that the director general may not have adequate powers either to interfere in prices or to ensure that there are sensible policies to guarantee supply.

We must be suspicious of the Government's attitude to supply. The Secretary of State was the Treasury's willing tool in blocking Sleipner's contract, but he now suggests that British Gas can return to that field for supply. I wonder whether, despite the fall in oil prices, gas consumers will pay heavily for that political interference. The Secretary of State offered British Gas the attractive prospect of freedom from political interference but British Gas probably well remembers that political interference by a Conservative Government has greatly damaged the industry and been of great disadvantage to the consumer.

We do not believe that the British consumer will benefit from this privatisation. I have asked the Minister of State to tell us whether people from overseas have already been employed to assist in the disposal of British Gas under part II. The House should be aware, although the press has appeared to ignore this fact, that Goldman Sachs of New York, Wood Gundy, Nomura of Tokyo and the Swiss Bank Corporation International of Zurich are all involved in assisting the Government to develop this vista of wider and democratic share ownership in Britain. We do not need the Swiss Bank Corporation International to assist in getting shares for the workers.

Presumably workers with shares will not be allowed to be influential. The quorum at the annual meeting will be two shareholders, which gives meaning to the Conservative party's attachment to democratic and wider share ownership! Those two shareholders will presumably be Sir Denis Rooke and some other friend who has a fair number of votes. The quorum will probably not include the workers. Perhaps the hon. Member for Rochford or, perhaps even more likely, the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) will be involved.

Dr. Michael Clark: Why me?

Mr. Hardy: The hon. Gentleman was particularly keen to see a structure which would allow the piracy in terms of economic theory to which he has long been attached. That is why I offered that prospect.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontefact and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) reminded the House that the Government believed that they had served Britain's interests well by suggesting that no single foreign holding would be allowed to have more than 15 per cent. of the shares. The Government expected us to fall down in gratitude and satisfaction when that national protection was offered. We cannot guess what 15 per cent. will be because we do not know for how much British Gas will be sold. I hope that the other place will insist on the Department of Energy providing information on the character of the privatisation which will follow.

The Secretary of State said that the Committee considered the matter in detail. However, some key aspects of the flotation were not considered. The Government would not tell us how much British Gas was worth. It is all right for the Secretary of State to say that some Labour Members suggested that the asset value should be a guide to the sale price—the Government may not expect to receive £18 billion from the sale, which is the net asset value at present—but the right hon.

Gentleman cannot then protest if, on selling British Gas for £6 billion or £7 billion, we complain that the national interest has been badly served and that a public asset has been disposed of in a profligate manner.

We are not relieved when, having expressed concern about the people who might own British Gas, we are told that Companies Act protection will apply, which means that anyone who owns more than 5 per cent. of the shares will have to be known to British Gas. That means that Conservative Members or, more likely, some of their more disreputable friends will have to declare a holding when it gets to a £300 million or £400 million level. We gain no great comfort from the thought that people like Conservative Members—or like President Marcos of the Philippines, Baby Doc of Haiti or any other of the assorted people who are viewed more favourably by Conservative Members than they are by us—could be secret holders of British Gas shares. What a picture of a measure which is supposed to assist the United Kingdom but which is a contemptible attempt by the Government to ensure that they get enough money to bribe the electorate at the next general election. That fact was not mentioned by the Secretary of State, but it was mentioned several times by my colleagues. It will be mentioned many more times between now and the next general election.

6.46 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith): We have had a good debate in the final stages of the Gas Bill. Although there are obviously deep differences and divisions between the two sides of the House on what is best for the future of British Gas, all the speeches have been marked by an appreciation of the achievements of the gas industry.

Gas is a great, important and well-managed industry, which is a tribute to those who have taken part in it and built it up over many years. Both sides of the House are united in their desire for the gas industry to continue to be a great industry and to serve Britain. Obviously, it is disappointing that we differ about the need for change. That background has resulted in a marked constructiveness and public-spiritedness in our debates. I should like to thank those hon. Members who have contributed to our debates.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I appreciated the contributions made by the Select Committee on Energy.

Mr. Lofthouse: They have not shown it.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I believe that we have shown it. The Select Committee's work, the evidence that it took and the report that it submitted to the House are all signs of that. The Government, including my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I, have made a direct response to the Select Committee's recommendations. For example, we have responded with respect to competition, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) referred. I am afraid that I always think of the way in which the right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) used to refer to my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate. I am glad that I did not fall into the mixture of words used by the right hon. Gentleman. The competition measures in the Bill have been improved.

With regard to energy efficiency, the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) tried to poke a certain amount of fun. My hon. Friends the Members for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) and for Erewash (Mr. Rost) were right to stress the importance of energy efficiency and conservation, and on Report we had a good debate on it. Clause 4 incorporates an obligation on the Secretary of State and on the director general to ensure efficient and economic gas supplies and use. That responsibility cannot lightly be discarded. It has been in the Bill from the beginning and, although it may not be as specific as my hon. Friends might have liked, we are committed to it, and the director will be committed to it when the Bill is enacted.

If I may deal with the question of transparency in the accounts—the second debate on Report in regard to the Select Committee report—I remind the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford that my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Lloyd) withdrew his amendment because I was able to give the reassurance that this was a matter to which the Government had paid attention. Although it was not in the Bill in the way that my hon. Friend might ideally have desired, the point was covered in the authorisation that comes under the Bill.

Mr. Lofthouse: Does the Minister agree that his hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Lloyd), before he withdrew his amendment, made it clear that he thought that some parts of the Select Committee report were falling on deaf ears?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: They certainly did not fall on deaf ears. I have given a number of examples of where direct action has been taken. I pay tribute to the work of the Select Committee.

Many speakers today have concentrated on the two important areas of competition and regulation. I make no apology for the fact that one of the major purposes of the Bill, in areas where British Gas obviously has a monopoly, has been to write in strong, clear and firm regulations. We have seen no need—indeed, we think it is undesirable—to extend the area of regulation beyond that which is absolutely necessary.

With regard to the contract market—something that the Opposition have never come to accept—increasingly, as the debate has gone on outside the House, those who have asked for more regulation have clearly demonstrated, if demonstration were ever needed, that there is competition in the industrial market, and that we were right to limit regulation to those areas where it was needed. In that regard, we have made sure that it will be strong.

By writing into the Bill an obligation on the director general to promote competition, we have given him a role in that respect as in other areas relating to pipelines and the common carrier. The director general will also have control over the tariff and its greater transparency.

Perhaps most notable—this we introduced on Report—are the new provisions relating to the obligation on British Gas to provide back-up supplies. This, I believe, makes the common carrier provisions more important and gives them more force than ever before. In a number of important areas where competition needs enforcement, we have made certain that these form a major part of the Bill, together with the authorisation under which the director general will have certain responsibilities.

As to regulation, the director general has real powers of enforcement in respect of some of the matters that I have

[Mr. Buchanan-Smith]

mentioned. If the public gas supplier does not comply with its obligations, the director general has power to enforce it to do so. He also has the power to modify the authorisation to ensure that the powers and authorisation provided in the Bill are effective.

I believe that the Government have been responsive at all stages of the Bill to the importance that the House attaches to the need to protect and promote the interests of the consumer. We made a major amendment to the Bill on Report to ensure that it is explicit about what the Gas Consumers Council is able to do. We have made sure that in all areas—in the matter of contracts, appliances and goods imported from abroad—the council will be able to act, and any consumer who feels aggrieved in any way will be able to take his complaints to the council.

Contrary to what the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) said, there will be regional representation on the Gas Consumers Council. We are giving the council the freedom to set up the kind of structure and organisation that, in the light of its experience under other legislation, it judges best able to represent the needs of consumers throughout the country. I certainly trust the new Gas Consumers Council to carry on the work of the old Gas Users Council. I believe it is right to give the new council a degree of freedom to run its own affairs and to operate in the interests of consumers. I am confident that it will be as effective as the old council.

On the question of safety, once again we have witnessed a certain amount of scare-mongering to the effect that, in privatising British Gas, we are in some way weakening safety provisions. That is not true. We have taken the opportunity in the Bill and in other related measures to strengthen the safety provisions so that the new gas industry under private ownership will have greater obligations than hitherto.

We are continuing the 24-hour emergency service, and British Gas will continue to carry out free safety checks for the elderly and disabled. There will be a stronger Health and Safety Executive regulation which in future will be backed by the power of custodial sentences rather than just fines. We are increasing the number of Health and Safety Executive inspectors, contrary to the impression that the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) has constantly tried to give to the House. More inspectors are being recruited. The Health and Safety Executive is devoting 60 per cent. more of its time to gas safety measures than hitherto. It is sheer scaremongering to say what the hon. Member for Cynon Valley and other Opposition Members have been saying. There will be new codes of practice for gas installers. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will introduce new regulations on safety standards for appliances, including imported appliances.

The Bill is good for the industry, for consumers and for the nation. As a result of the Bill we shall see a continuation of the Government's policy of returning the assets of the nation to the people. The number of shareholders in this country has doubled since 1979 because of the policies of the Government. The Bill takes wider share ownership another great step forward. I ask the House to support the Third Reading of the Bill.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 287, Noes 201.

Division No. 115] **[7.00 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman

Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Gerald Malone.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*

Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Ron Davies.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Adjournment (Easter and May Day)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House, at its rising on Thursday 27th March, do adjourn until Tuesday 8th April and, at its rising on Friday 2nd May, do adjourn until Tuesday 6th May; and the House shall not adjourn on Thursday 27th March until Mr. Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts which have been agreed upon by both Houses.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

7.14 pm

Mr. John Silkin (Lewisham, Deptford): I do not wish the Adjournment motion to pass without a protest from the Opposition Benches on behalf of those whose views ought to be heeded by the Government but whom the Government choose to ignore. I am talking about those who are not able to make the tax-free gains from shares that the Chancellor envisages, because neither the Budget nor their employers provide them with enough money to be able to purchase shares in the first place.

There are two early-day motions on the Order Paper, Nos. 204 and 217, about speech therapists, and they are signed by hon. Members from both major political parties. I should like to speak about speech therapists and to quote from a letter from a constituent of mine who is a speech therapist. She says:

"I am the only speech therapist at the hospital and have sole responsibility for the assessment, diagnosis, treatment and discharge of all cases requiring speech therapy.

The caseload comprises mainly stroke patients and head injuries, but also voice cases, including laryngectomies, and patients suffering from progressing disorders.

The hospital houses a stroke unit where patients are offered intensive treatment.

I am responsible for training and liaison with all other relevant staff, including lecturing to doctors, nurses and physiotherapists.

I am required to advise, inform and assist relatives and patients in dealing with the emotional trauma which inevitably accompanies stroke or head injury.

Other responsibilities include clinical training of final year speech therapy students (for which I receive extra payment) and organising and running a stroke club (a voluntary evening activity without payment or time in lieu).

I have worked for 12 years in the NHS following a three-year training course and also hold a first-class honours degree in psychology, and this year will be earning £9,175."

Until recently, speech therapy was an all-female profession, and is still more than 99 per cent. female.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): That is why they receive such low pay.

Mr. Silkin: As my hon. Friend rightly says, that is why they receive such low pay. However, it is not only the 99-plus per cent. women who are badly paid. Men are only marginally better paid.

Another constituent of mine is a speech therapist, and after five years of study and four years work in the service he earns £10,033 a year. He is marginally better off than my woman constituent, but for a responsible job like that such low pay is a scandal and a disgrace. It is made worse by the fact that speech therapists are now required to undergo a four-year degree course before they can practise. That helps them and it helps the patients, but it does not help the salaries. It is not that the Government have wrong priorities: they have no priorities at all.

If we examine the record of the National Health Service, we see that in a week's time there will be a rise in prescription charges. When Labour left office in 1979 the prescription charge was 20p, and it will go up to £2·20 next week. That is 1,100 per cent. inflation in the cost of treatment under this Government. In addition, the

Government have deliberately forced the authorities to give contracts for cleaning and laundry to private individuals at bargain basement rates. They are proposing to sell nurses' homes.

When only those who administer direct help and those who suffer are penalised, it is time to wonder what is happening to the National Health Service. When the NHS has increased its bureaucracy by about 68,000 to a record of nearly 800,000 people—68,000 more than in 1979—we are entitled to wonder what priorities, if any, the Government have. When the payment of speech therapists is an affront, not just to their professional qualifications, but to the hopes and aspirations of their patients, we should query that.

I talked about the profession being badly paid, and my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) rightly said that that was because speech therapy was entirely a female profession. There had been a promise to discuss equal pay. The management side on the Whitley council agreed to do so a few months ago, but I am told that only yesterday the management side of the Whitley council, I suspect encouraged by the Government, said that it would not discuss that matter.

One understands that there are precedents to be created. There is an overall issue, that perhaps the Government do not wish to see go beyond speech therapists into the NHS and Government service generally, but in this case, if in no other—it should be in all other cases as well—there is more than a reason why, if we are to keep our speech therapists and see that the patients benefit, that question should be dealt with immediately.

I do not want to detain the House any longer than is necessary, but if we do not deal with the matter now it will not be raised in the usual conflict between the parties—the right and proper conflict that there should be. The matter will simply be ignored and forgotten, as always happens when a small group of people, however intelligent and articulate, are far fewer in number that the general mass about whom we talk.

I hope that the Leader of the House will, as he has always done in the past when I have raised questions with him, make the necessary inquiries of the Department, and perhaps even write to me in due course, to see whether we can do something to assist those who, according to the two early-day motions about which I spoke, 160 right hon. and hon. Members feel should get a far better deal than they are getting at the moment.

7.22 pm

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): I have some sympathy with the point raised by the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin). I have been approached by speech therapists in my constituency, and I know what a marvellous job they do because I have seen examples of their work.

I want to refer to another medical matter today. I do not want the House to adjourn without my having the opportunity to draw the attention of the House and Ministers in the Department of Health and Social Security to the growing public disquiet over the powers of the General Medical Council to discipline doctors. That disquiet has been heightened by the tragic case of Harriet English from my constituency.

We are all too familiar with the widely reported and lasciviously read cases of doctors' sexual activities with patients, but rather more rarely do we read of cases of doctors' incompetence, although such cases are often of far greater importance and have far more dangerous consequences than the lurid cases that attract the popular press.

The powers of the GMC derive from the Medical Act 1983. Under section 36 no sanctions or remedies are available unless the conduct of the practitioner concerned is judged to be "serious professional misconduct".

At this stage I want to refer to the tragic case of Harriet English, the daughter of my agent in Cambridgeshire, South-West. I raised the matter in the House last July. Briefly, Harriet, aged 22, a perfectly fit and athletic girl, felt tired after playing badminton and taking other exercise and she later complained of a pain in the shoulder. General practitioner Dr. Barretto was consulted. He diagnosed a torn ligament and administered an injection of cortisone. He did not inquire whether Harriet was right or left-handed, which was relevant, he did not take her temperature, and he did not take her blood pressure. Later, in his absence, Harriet was similarly treated by his partners, Dr. Ryan and Dr. Page. She became extremely ill during the subsequent four days and was rushed to the London clinic, where, in agonising circumstances, she died of septicemia which had at no time previously been diagnosed.

I shall not weary the House with the details of the inquest and the complex subsequent investigations by medical experts. Suffice it to say that ultimately a case alleging serious professional misconduct was brought against Dr. Barretto and Dr. Ryan and it was heard by the GMC disciplinary committee on 18 March 1986. Learned counsel were involved and experts were called on both sides. Not surprisingly, they expressed differing views. But one expert, Dr. Martin Wood, attested that Harriet's symptoms should have alerted Dr. Barretto to the fact that she was suffering from something more than a torn ligament.

However, the GMC's decision — from which I understand there is no appeal, except on a point of law to the Privy Council — was that serious professional misconduct was not proved and the doctors were cleared. Nevertheless, the case left unanswered questions of competence and acceptability of conduct. No alternative charge is available to the GMC under the Medical Act. Where medical conduct is "unacceptable" — to use a phrase of the GMC in its handbook — no remedy or penalty is provided.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), whom I am pleased to see in his place, is a leading campaigner on the issue and has a private Member's Bill which seeks to amend section 36 of the Medical Act 1983 so as to provide that unacceptable professional conduct can be brought in as an alternative. He can cite a number of cases to support the argument, as can other hon. Members, in particular the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Abse). The GMC maintains that the additional powers proposed in the Bill would not be helpful.

I must quote from a letter that the hon. Member for Newham, South has given to me, which he received from the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security on 12 March 1986. It says:

"The Council"—

the General Medical Council—

"maintains that the additional power that you propose"—

in the hon. Gentleman's Bill—

[Sir Anthony Grant]

"would not be helpful because it might lead to a tendency to substitute the lesser for the more serious finding which in the longer term would be likely to weaken rather than strengthen the public's confidence in the Council's disciplinary powers."

That is an extremely curious argument. It is rather like saying that the only motoring offence should be dangerous driving, without the alternative offence of driving without due care and attention; or, indeed, that the only charge for causing death should be murder, with no charge of manslaughter or unlawful homicide.

All this basically stems from the Merrison report in 1975, Cmnd. 6018, from which the constitutional powers of the GMC derive. Paragraph 10 states:

"It is important to understand in this context that the GMC is merely the instrument for the proper supervision of this contract"—

that is, between the public and the profession—

"and that it derives its authority, and indeed its being, from legislation."

The report goes on:

"The legislature"—

that is, Parliament—

"acts in this context for the public, and it is for Parliament to decide the nature of the contract and the way it is be executed."

Therefore, this matter to which I draw attention is essentially for Parliament.

Of course, we all know that the overwhelming majority of doctors do their duty supremely well. Only a tiny minority are guilty of serious professional misconduct. A slightly larger minority, but still a minority, indulge in professional conduct that is "unacceptable", in GMC terms. Nevertheless, I believe that there is growing public anxiety, which my case illustrates, which would be relieved by the reform that I have described and that is contained in the private Member's Bill to which I have referred.

As I said in the House last year, my constituents Richard and Ann English know that nothing can bring back their beloved daughter, but they hope, as I do, that others may be spared Harriet's tragic fate. I ask the Ministers concerned to give this whole matter their most careful and sympathetic consideration.

7.31 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I am sure that all hon. Members wish the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) good fortune in pursuing the case of Harriet English, which is clearly worthy of the attention of those on the Treasury Bench and all hon. Members of the House. I hope, too, that when the chance comes to debate the private Member's Bill it will be given widespread support.

Tonight I should like to widen the debate to the question of Nepalese Christians, which is perhaps especially topical in view of the recent visits to Nepal by Her Majesty the Queen and our Foreign Secretary.

Just after Christmas, an Anglo-American human rights team which included myself and the hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) travelled to Nepal to examine allegations of torture and brutality against the small Christian minority there. Our objectives included the following: first, nationwide tolerance for Christians accused of violating the constitution as it relates to their religion at every level of the judicial system; secondly, an end to the arbitrary harassment of accused Christians during the judicial process; thirdly, recognition of the right to reasonable and judicious bail; fourthly, equal protection under the law for the Christian population; fifthly, an end to the confiscation of bibles; and, sixthly, movement towards changing Nepalese law to conform to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, to which Nepal subscribes.

During our delegation's visit to Nepal we travelled over 1,000 miles in six days and took evidence from many people. In remote villages and towns and in the capital, Kathmandu, we met hundreds of people and, in subsequent interviews with the Law and Justice Secretary and the Foreign Minister, Mr. Ranodhir Subbha, we instanced many examples of human rights violations. The hon. Member for Bournemouth, East and I subsequently presented the Nepalese Government and the Nepalese ambassador here in London with transcripts corroborating our findings.

Before her Majesty the Queen and the Foreign Secretary went to Nepal, we met the latter and outlined our concerns. I regret that the Under-Secretary, in his reply on 31 January to a question that I tabled, said that he had virtually no power to intervene and thought it really not appropriate for the British Government to monitor the situation in Nepal. He said:

"Allegations about the treatment of Nepalese citizens in Nepal are an internal matter for the Government of that country: We have no locus standi to intervene."—[*Official Report*, 31 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. *646*.]:

He went on to say that Her Majesty's embassy at Kathmandu was in regular contact with Christian leaders and missionary societies in Nepal.

Certainly, when I met Ambassador Hurrell in Nepal he was in contact with Christian leaders, particularly the Rev. Charles Mendies, and he had heard from them first hand of some of the allegations which we have instanced both to the Nepalese authorities and to the Foreign Office.

While I was disappointed at that reply, I was pleased that, following the interview with the Foreign Secretary, he took the opportunity when in Nepal to raise these important matters with his opposite number, and in a letter which was sent subsequently he said:

"During the visit I took the opportunity to raise informally with the Nepalese Foreign Minister the alleged persecution of Christians in Nepal. Mr. Subbha said that he understood our concern. He was very concerned about the allegations of torture, and told me that these were being investigated. I was also able to speak to a number of missionaries working in Nepal and to tell them of our interest in their situation.

I can assure you that the treatment of Christians in Nepal is a matter which we shall continue to monitor closely."

While I am grateful for that change of attitude on the part of the Foreign Office, I still believe that there is a deal of misapprehension both by Members of the House and by people from the journalists' corps, who constantly present Nepal as some sort of romantic Arcadia, infinitely tolerant in its treatment of minorities. This simply does not square with reality.

If, without going into great detail on the report, I give two quotations to the Leader of the House, he will get the general thrust of the statements which were made to us when we visited Nepal. The first says:

"they beat our brother and he was hung up and beat and kept at night in stocks. And then he became very sick and after he was released a few days later he passed away. And still in that particular village there is intensified persecution of the Christians."

The second quotation says:

"the four of us who were in a separate group were kept in a separate jail, and all night we were beaten by the police. Our feet

were kept in stocks and we were beaten on the soles of our feet . . . And even after three months when we were released we were not able to walk properly."

In a letter to *The Times*, the Nepalese ambassador to the Court of St. James, Mr. Ishwari Pandey, stated:

"an individual can freely practise his faith"

and may "change his faith". Regrettably, that is not true. By law, citizens may not evangelise, nor may they convert to Christianity. If this law is transgressed, they face up to six years in jail. In 1985 alone, over 80 people were charged with "preaching Christianity" and causing a "disturbance to Hinduism."

Mr. Pandey has also strongly asserted on more than one occasion that

"not a single drop of blood has ever been shed in the name of religion".

During the time that we were taking evidence, especially in the east Nepalese town of Dahran, witness after witness described beatings and acts of brutality meted out by local officials—incidents which are hardly consistent with the ambassador's claim.

Mr. Subbha, the Nepalese Foreign Minister and a most gracious man, is a strong advocate of King Birendra's foreign affairs initiative to create a zone of peace in the region. He is also totally committed to his country's participation in international organisations such as the United Nations. But a failure by his Government to curb the excesses of fanatical local zealots can only undermine Nepal's reputation and bring his laudable attempts to create a zone of peace into ridicule. Nor will the West be able to take seriously a country whose code of law directly contradicts article 18 of the United Nations convention on human rights:

"Everyone should have the right to freedom to have or adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching."

Not only are Nepal's 35,000 Christians denied this right, but they are subject to arbitrary harassment, humiliation and persecution. Once they are charged, cases are postponed, and bail is set at ludicrously high levels. Sometimes bail is used punitively, and we found examples of the bail of Christians being confiscated even on acquittal.

There is also clearly one law for foreigners and another for the indigenous Nepalese. Last March 14 members of a group called YWAM—Youth With a Mission—were arrested in a town called Dahding for staging a puppet show illustrating gospel stories. The 14 were held for seven days in a cell measuring 9 ft by 12 ft. The conditions were indescribably bad. The charges against the foreign contingent were dropped, but the five young Nepalese in the group face up to six years in prison.

Other Christians told us of obstacles placed in their path. The hon. Member for Bournemouth, East and I saw a Bible school which had been closed. We heard how Mother Teresa's nuns have a centre for the destitute and dying in the shadow of Kathmandu's Pashupatinath Hindu temple, but the authorities have refused them permission to open a leprosarium.

The Jesuits operated a rehabilitation centre for drug addicts under the supervision of Father Tom Gafrey. Heroin addiction, one of the more malign western influences, has reached epidemic proportions there. Yet Mr. Tek Bahadur Thapa, of the Nepalese narcotic drug control office, refused to extend visas for the Christians who manned the centre. So Nepal's only drug rehabilitation centre was forced to close last August.

Nepal is understandably worried about western influences, and some humility is required of the heirs of "rice Christianity". But past excesses do not excuse present intolerance. Nor do they exonerate gross distortions by the Nepalese Government-controlled press. The comments of the hon. Member for Bournemouth, East were grossly distorted and deftly turned around to give entirely the opposite meaning. Our findings were completely suppressed and the only story that appeared carried the headline:

"Christian delegation satisfied with community's lot."

Nothing could have been further from the truth.

Since our visit, matters have not improved. Two more people have been arrested to join the over 80 others who were arrested last year. Secondly, evidence has been given to us about discrimination against Christians in the Gurkha regiments. This has been provided by Mr. Byatt, former civilian lecturer in English in the Brigade of Gurkhas training depot.

Mr. Byatt worked from January 1980 to the end of February 1984 in the training depot. He noted that the Christians in the depot were not given the opportunity to worship. He also discovered actual discrimination against those who wanted to change their documents to declare the fact that they had become Christians. In the brigade, recruits have their forms automatically stamped "Hindu" to ease the flow of registration.

New recruits are not permitted to leave the depot during the first nine months of their training. In consequence, Christians are not permitted to attend the church services. The Anglican church of St. Martin's is in the next-door depot, but it remains out of bounds to recruits. The anomaly arises because recruits are obliged to attend Hindu temple service. Recruits may also go swimming, under supervision, in the next-door camp, in the pool that is next to the church.

The recruits are billeted in a camp called Malaga Lines, and this is separated from the other depot, called Borneo Lines, by an air strip. One Christian Gurkha wanted to attend church, but was not permitted to do so under camp regulations although he desperately wanted to go. He told his mother that the hardest part of serving in the Gurkhas was not being allowed to go to church.

The second major act of discrimination is more serious. In 1972, one Gurkha soldier wanted to change his documents to register the fact that he had become a Christian. He was unsuccessful, and had to recant in the face of dismissal. That is unacceptable.

Nepal is a beautiful country and the Nepalese have much to be proud of, but it still has grievous economic and social problems. Some 77 per cent. are illiterate, life expectancy is only 45 years and there is an infant mortality rate of 150 deaths out of every 1,000 live births. There is an annual average per capita income of only £100 a year, with an inflation rate of 14 per cent. and a recent devaluation of 20 per cent. Britain should boost its meagre £10 million aid programme to help to combat the unrelieved endemic poverty.

There are many other ways in which our two countries could help each other, and much that we could teach each other. Inevitably, a prerequisite of closer relations is mutual tolerance of each other's minorities. Her Majesty's Government should not turn a blind eye to the plight of

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Nepalese Christians. I hope that, when the Leader of the House replies, he will be able to give an assurance that continual monitoring of the condition of Christians in Nepal will be undertaken by Her Majesty's representatives there.

7.42 pm

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): The House listened with concern to the speech made by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton). I know nothing of the details of what he describes, but Nepal is a country with which we have always had close relations, and in particular the Gurhkas stand high in the admiration of the British people. I am sure that what the hon. Gentleman has said will be considered closely by Ministers.

I shall raise three important matters, of which the first is agriculture. It is important that we should have a clear statement from the Government — whether it comes before the House rises for the Easter recess or shortly afterwards — of their overall strategy for agriculture. I can remember sitting where the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) is sitting under the five years of Labour Government, and listening to Lord Peart, as he now is, and the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) producing White Papers for the expansion of agriculture. I can remember my right hon. Friend the member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) doing the same thing for a Conservative Government.

Clearly the rules and realities have changed. We all accept that surpluses must be controlled. The problem must be tackled, but it is essential that we do something to restore the morale of agriculture, because it does not know where it is supposed to be going, nor what it is supposed to do instead of growing unwanted surpluses. I strongly emphasise to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that I should like him to ask my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to prepare a White Paper setting out a strategy for agriculture in the new reality of a time of surplus, in which production must be restrained. Whether we address problems such as "set-aside", or other techniques of dealing with such problems, we must set a new strategy.

The second matter is a constituency issue, but one of considerable importance to my constituents concerning the Ministry of Defence. At the moment, the Ministry has a mania of trying to merge service institutions. As a member of the Public Accounts Committee, I am partly responsible for the recent report which showed the ridiculous nonsense over the proposed joint music school. I hope that Ministers will take that report seriously.

A similar move is being contemplated in my constituency. There is an inquiry into a proposal to close RAF North Luffenham. This would mean the movement of up to 930 RAF personnel, the loss of 150 civilian jobs and the loss of £250,000 worth of rate income to the local authority. Such a move would be extremely unwelcome in my constituency. I have made it clear to Lord Trefgarne that if he proceeds with these proposals he can expect my strongest possible opposition, and I am bringing a delegation from the local council to see him next month.

Lord Trefgarne is also proposing to close the dog school at the Royal Army Veterinary Corps at Melton Mowbray, and move that to RAF Newton in Nottinghamshire. Both of these schemes are extremely poorly thought out. The costings have been far from adequately done, and I make it clear to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and Lord Trefgarne that the latter can expect much trouble from me if these suggestions are carried out. I sincerely hope that they will not be. My right hon. Friend knows me well enough to know that that is not necessarily an idle threat.

The third matter is one on which I have recently made myself a pain in the neck to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House — the Shops Bill. My right hon. Friend would be doing the House and the Conservative party a service if he said in advance what concessions the Government are willing to make on the Bill. It would be difficult if the Government tried to proceed in this House in the same way as they proceeded in the other place — that is, by rejecting every amendment in unequivocal terms. This is a matter on which many Conservative Members feel strongly. For example, many of us have long been concerned about the situation that pertains on Good Friday, which is now becoming an ordinary working day for a great many people. This is unacceptable to Christians, and I do not want to see it happening to Sundays.

My right hon. Friend and I had a semi-joking exchange on this matter last Thursday, during business questions. I hope that he will use the recess to consult his colleagues and consider what can be done to meet the real concerns of many hon. Members on both sides of the House and large numbers of people outside, and to try to get a sensible and workable measure on the statute books, and one that will not offend large numbers of people.

7.48 pm

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I hope that the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) will not mind if I do not follow him in detail, although I shall speak about the Ministry of Defence.

I hope that the House will not adjourn for the Easter recess until we have considered the Crown Proceedings Act 1947, section 10. This section deprived service men and ex-service men of the right to sue for negligence, no matter how gravely or seriously disabled they may be. It also deprives the families of service men who have been killed by negligence of the right to sue. Not only that, but it deprives them of the information — to which they are entitled — about what happened. In talking to many of the families involved, and certainly many of the ex-service men involved, one finds a deep feeling about the lack of information — information to which they have been refused access by the Ministry of Defence.

The Ministry of Defence has an appalling record when it comes to discussing the rights of service men and ex-service men which are relevant to section 10. The Ministry of Defence says that they are public servants, but other public servants have the right to sue when they are damaged by negligence or their dependants have the right to sue if they are killed by negligence. Police and firemen have that right but apparently service men must be denied it. It is wrong to deprive service men, or their dependants when they are killed, of that right.

What are the arguments of the Ministry of Defence for keeping this outrageous anachronism? First, it says that there is no easy dividing line between military and other action. That is nonsense. Any service man or anyone who

has been in the firing line can soon put it right about what is military action and what is not. Therefore, there is no problem of definition.

Secondly, the Ministry of Defence says that discipline would be affected if service men or ex-service men were given that right. Of course, that is nonsense. Legal redress has nothing to do with discipline. The Ministry of Defence cannot use that bogus argument. Thirdly, it says that negligence is hard to prove. Of course it is hard to prove, but it is also hard to prove in civil cases. The proof should be decided not by the Minister or his civil servants but by a court of law. If a claim is to be made it should be decided upon by the courts, so there is no argument for saying that it is hard to prove.

Fourthly, the Minister says—Ministers have said this in parliamentary answers—that section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947 has existed for 38 years and therefore it must be pretty good. There could not be a more bogus argument than that. In fact, the existence of that section for 38 years has outraged service men and ex-service men over the years. It has caused very great distress to them. Simply because it has existed for so long does not mean that it is satisfactory. When section 10 was introduced in 1947 by a Labour Government—this is a non-party political matter—the then Attorney-General, Sir Hartley Shawcross, gave a clear impression that, even though the section must be brought in, the awards of compensation would not in any way be diminished. He was not speaking of any specific award but he said that, overall, service men would be entitled to the same kind of pension as other people would get, or would have got if they had recourse to law. Experience proves that that is quite wrong. Service men are now deprived of adequate compensation, even though they may be severely damaged by negligence.

An organisation has now been set up called the Section Ten Abolition Group, STAG for short. It is a group of ex-service men who are deeply angered and embittered by the attitude of the Ministry of Defence over the years. Its chairman is Mrs. Carol Mills and she is doing a marvellous job in combining and unifying the people who are involved.

Mrs. Mills and her husband lost their son in especially tragic circumstances. He was burnt to death when a missile backfired. The family have been deprived of the right to information about the death of their son. I think that they are entitled to it. They have certainly been deprived of the right to sue for damages. They are not after the money; it is the principle involved.

Mrs. Mills and her husband came with me to see the Secretary of State for Defence on a deputation a few weeks ago. They are parents whose son had been appallingly burned and died and they think that it was due to negligence. Also on that deputation was one of my constituents, Martin Ketterick. He is now paralysed from the waist down and is appallingly disabled. The accident occurred when a rope was cut as he was abseiling down a cliff. He thinks that that was due to negligence. Those are clearly very sad and tragic cases and those people presented their case to the Secretary of State.

Let me place it on record that the Secretary of State listened carefully to what we all had to say and gave us a very good reception and response. I pay tribute to him for the way in which he received that deputation. It was a splendid response. He did not commit himself, he could not commit himself, and I did not expect him to. However, I am making these remarks now because I want to press the Ministry of Defence, including the Secretary of State. I have no confidence in the Ministry of Defence, as distinct from the Secretary of State, because the same civil servants are advising this Secretary of State as have advised successive Secretaries of State for years. They have badly advised Ministers and they have given all the excuses that I have presented to the House.

I hope that the Secretary of State will bring forward legislation. I hope that he will abolish section 10 of the Act. If he does—or whatever he does—I hope that there will be retrospective provisions. If there is not, Mr. and Mrs. Mills, Martin Ketterick and all the service men who attended the inaugural meeting which I set up in the Jubilee Room at the House of Commons will be deprived of the rights which I hope will be given to service men and women in the future. It would be quite wrong to exclude them after all their campaigning.

If the Secretary of State feels unable to help, these ex-service men and the relatives of those who have died under what we think are circumstances of negligence, may find it necessary to parade outside the Ministry of Defence and outside recruiting offices to let potential recruits know that they are denied the right to sue for negligence which is given to all public servants. We hope that it will not be necessary. I do not think that it will be necessary because of the way in which the Secretary of State received us and responded to us. I hope that in his response he will show that there is no justification for depriving service men of this basic right and that he will act accordingly as soon as possible.

7.58 pm

Sir Julian Ridsdale (Harwich): I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity of saying how disappointed I was to read the announcement in *The Daily Telegraph* today that a House of Commons written answer yesterday said that an early Bill will be introduced, presumably in the next Queen's Speech, to transfer pilots to the control of harbour authorities. It also said that Trinity House is to lose its responsibility as the principal pilotage authority of Britain's harbours after almost 500 years.

I have been doing my best to prevent the need for that legislation over the past 15 months. For that work and the help that I have given to pilots over the years as the Member for Harwich, a few weeks ago I received an honorary pilot's licence from the Deputy Master of Trinity House. I feel that I should declare that interest.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Mr. Mitchell), because when he was Under-Secretary of State for Transport he took great care and trouble to bring all the interested parties together. If he had stayed in that post and the Department had not been so hopelessly overworked, I believe that he would have succeeded. But I still believe that it is possible to proceed without legislation.

I am glad to have had this opportunity to appeal over the head of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I appeal to her to find time to tell my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, as soon as possible, to make one more effort to reach agreement between the parties concerned. The proposal for legislation is that pilotage should be placed under the port authorities, and pilots should give up their fee-earning, self-employed status and become the employees

[Sir Julian Ridsdale]

of the port authorities. Indeed, the very same proposal came from a report chaired by the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) in 1966.

Now port authorities are local authorities, and have the same behaviour patterns, both managerial and fiscal, as other local authorities. At a time when the Government are seeking to curb the power of local authorities and to privatise services within them, is it not an anachronism and an anomaly that a group of self-employed, fee-earning people should face with being taken over by such a group? Do we really want to take the control of pilots away from Trinity House after 500 years? I have yet to find a good reason for doing so. Do we really want to weaken the authority of an institution that has been doing its job for so long?

For my part, I could not support such legislation, and I know that many of my hon. Friends feel very strongly about the issue. That is why I appeal to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to tell the Secretary of State to make one more effort to reach agreement, and that is why I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me and enabling me to make this eleventh hour appeal to prevent such legislation. It does not in any way follow the political principles in which I or many of my hon. Friends, believe.

8.2 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): It is a pleasure to speak after the hon. Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) because, like him, I shall raise a maritime matter. I hope that he will find it interesting. It involves a defence issue, and I know he has a special interest in defence matters.

I urge hon. Members not to agree to adjourn for the recess until we have discussed the impending decision on the auxiliary oiler replenishment vessel. The issue is of enormous importance to my constituents, to the north-east and to our national defence. I shall briefly outline the background to it.

In 1979, Swan Hunter was commissioned by the Ministry of Defence to carry out a feasibility study for a new generation of fleet replenishment vessels called AORs. The AOR is designed to complement the type 23 frigate, providing fuel, provisions, maintenance, and extra helicopters, as well as its own defence systems. It operates at a speed compatible with the type 23 frigate, and without the AOR the type 23 frigate programme makes no sense.

When Swan Hunter, the major shipyard in my constituency, was privatised, it was sold as a supplier of warships, in particular of fleet auxiliaries, to the Royal Navy. Over the past 25 years Swan Hunter has supplied the Royal Navy with 32 per cent. of all the Royal Navy's surface warships, 39 per cent. of all its amphibious vessels and, most importantly, 84 per cent. of all major royal fleet auxiliaries.

The importance of major royal fleet auxiliaries as a source of work for Swan Hunter was stressed a year or two years ago when I met the hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), who was then a Minister at the Department of Trade and Industry. He emphasised that Swan Hunter should look to that area for its future. Unfortunately, times have changed. Yet it is significant that the only AOR vessel to be built in the United Kingdom is the Kharg, which was built at Swan Hunter.

Although Swan Hunter is a shadow of its former self, it is still the country's premier shipbuilder. The AOR order is crucial to its survival as a major shipbuilder, so I am sure that hon. Members will readily understand my feelings and those of other Members of Parliament for the north-east, when we learned last week, through press leaks, that the order for the AORs was to be placed with Harland and Wolff. That is a devastating blow to the north-east of England and to the shipbuilding community that I represent. Perhaps more importantly, such a decision would be wrong and irrational on almost every single possible criterion.

I readily understand that to this Government cost is the most important criterion. Swan Hunter is a private sector company. It wins orders with competitive prices. Harland and Wolff uses public subsidies. It is important to remember that we are discussing pricing for a market that Harland and Wolff has not been in for 20 years, but Swan Hunter gets the majority of its business from that market.

It is widely rumoured that Harland and Wolff's bid for the AOR is below that of Swan Hunter. I fear that Harland and Wolff has been able to reduce its price because of cross-subsidy. Last year, Harland and Wolff received £37 million from the British taxpayer, and I fear that that financial assistance could give it the competitive edge. We are assured that there is no cross-subsidy, but it is impossible to tell until after the event. If there is no cross-subsidy, we may have an independent inquiry, conducted by Mr. Graham Day, or some other shipbuilder of national repute, into the state of affairs at Harland and Wolff. I understand from Swan Hunter that it would be only too willing to have a similar inquiry into its circumstances. Of course, Swan Hunter is privately owned, and there can be no question of cross-subsidy, and so on.

What will happen if price drift occurs afterwards? If Swan Hunter wins the order and there is price drift, the cost will be borne by the management. Their homes and private assets are on the line. But if Harland and Wolff has the order and there is price drift, the British taxpayer will have to pay. If John Parker, the chairman of Harland and Wolff, is so sure that there will be no price drift and is not just kidding the Prime Minister, let him and his management team put their homes and private assets on the line. I challenge him to do that. Last year, his wages rose to £67,000, which represented a rise of 45 per cent. That was not quite in line with Harland and Wolff's losses, which rose by only 20 per cent. to £36 million. I challenge him to put his assets on the line and to guarantee that he will personally take up any losses occasioned by price rises. But that will be too late for Swan Hunter, because it will be in extraordinarily dire straits if it does not get the order.

The argument about sub-contractors affecting the overall tender is sometimes advanced. Swan Hunter has allowed for that, but last year Harland and Wolff complained that the losses on its sub-contractors accounted for a substantial part of its overall losses. What guarantee is there that that will not happen again, and that the taxpayer will not have to pick up the bill? If that happens at Swan Hunter, the management and owners will have to pick up the bill. Is it fair that a company in the private sector, with only private resources, should be invited to tender for an order for which the Government originally said the private sector should fight, only to find itself fighting against a company that the Government own?

The AOR vessel is crucial to the type 23 programme. Without it, the type 23 programme is nonsense. It must be delivered on time if the very first of the type 23 frigates are to play the part that they are designed to play in our defence.

Let us consider Swan Hunter's delivery record. HMS Ark Royal, York, Illustrious and Exeter were all delivered ahead of schedule and within budget. That should be compared with the abysmal and lamentable record of Harland and Wolff.

The very first AOR—the lead vessel—must be there on time, yet, if the press leaks are correct, it is to be entrusted to the Belfast shipyard of Harland and Wolff. What a weapon for those in that community who wish to make political mischief. They would have a chance to undermine the main thrust of the Royal Navy's defence towards the end of this century.

What will be the effects on our community if we do not obtain the order? There will be 2,000 redundancies at Swan Hunter, reducing the work force to just over 2,000. We have just endured 2,800 redundancies in a community that already has one of the highest levels of unemployment in the country. With those further redundancies, unemployment in Newcastle upon Tyne, East would be the highest in the country, including Northern Ireland. That is something that our community could not endure.

The design team at Swan Hunter is a national asset. Swan Hunter had hoped that it would help the company to win orders. It is one of the aspects of the business that gives the company a competitive edge. That team will be broken up, and it will be impossible to reassemble it.

Having outlined the depressing effects on our community, I should like to urge the Government to consider a compromise. It would be possible to share the work between Harland and Wolff and Swan Hunter. If the first lead vessel were given to Swan Hunter, the second could be placed with Harland and Wolff. Swan Hunter needs the work immediately. The redundancies will be declared as soon as it is announced that the work is to go to Harland and Wolff. At Harland and Wolff there is sufficient work until 1987, when the second vessel would come on stream. The two yards could co-operate to their mutual benefit, and the Ministry of Defence would share that advantage.

I ask the Government to consider factors other than price. If that is held to be an unreasonable demand in this era of competition and free markets, may I say that the last time the Ministry of Defence was ordering frigates, the previous Secretary of State felt quite free to place a type 22 frigate, which Swan Hunter had won in competitive tender, with Cammell Laird instead at an extra cost to the British taxpayer of £9 million. He made a decision on social grounds. It may have been perfectly proper to do so, but our community paid the price; and it seems that we are to pay the price on the AOR, too.

I conclude on two points of principle. First, can it be right for a privatised company, trying to fight in a difficult market, to be forced to compete with a state-subsidised enterprise? Like is not being compared with like. The owners, management and work force of Swan Hunter are 100 per cent. behind the company. The energy and effort that the directors and owners of Swan Hunter put into the bids made over the weekend in trying to achieve the reversal of what was understood to be an inevitable decision—trying to make an eleventh hour appeal to the Government to reconsider the position—is testament to their will to survive and to the will of the community that shipbuilding should survive on Tyneside. They deserve credit for that.

Secondly, there is the broader politics of the situation. Last Thursday, the Prime Minister courteously received me and my hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett). The right hon. Lady took an interest in the situation, and I am grateful to her for that. But I must emphasise that Tyneside fears that it will be paying the price for the Anglo-Irish agreement. If so, that would be grotesquely unfair. It would not be in the national interest, and it would certainly not be in the interests of the community that I represent.

8.16 pm

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): I wish to raise one local and one national matter. I am sure that the problems of itinerants or gipsies have from time to time concerned most hon. Members. There is currently a problem in Derby over a specific site, and the matter has been referred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

A dispute has arisen between two local authorities over the suitability of land at Chequers lane in my constituency as a site for itinerants. Both the authorities are controlled by the Labour party. Derby city council takes the view that the land is inappropriate for that purpose, and I concur with that view. The county council takes a different view. In my view the county council is wrong, for a number of reasons. First, valid objections and public opinion on the matter appear to have been disregarded. A petition has been signed by 1,495 people and presented to me, and a delegation went to the county offices at Matlock, but so far it appears that the views expressed have been dismissed by the county councillors.

There is an alternative use for the site—an industrial use. The land is ideal for industrial development, and in my view should be so used. I feel that any other development of the Chequers lane site would be detrimental to, or at any rate not harmonious with, adjoining industry.

I should like to read brief extracts from two of a number of letters that I have received. The first is from the chief executive of Bemrose Corporation, who says:

> "We genuinely believe that location of a permanent gipsy site at Chequers Lane could seriously damage our security business and jeopardise employment prospects in this part of Derby. This view is shared by adjacent employers and in particular by Joseph Mason plc and Sawley Packaging which is owned by Rolls Royce . . . Bemrose does support the alternative proposal for development of the site for industrial purposes."

The writer makes a number of other comments.

I have also had a letter from the managing director of Joseph Mason, paint manufacturers, who says:

> "We are not against the principle of provision of a gipsy site, but we can see no merit whatsoever in immersing such a site in the centre of such a vital and sensitive industrial area . . . The site is also bounded by the very busy A52 arterial road. This stretch of A52 has already resulted in the loss of life of children without, at present, any adjacent dwellings. To place a gipsy site within throwing distance of this road appears madness."

The proximity of the A52 to the site presents a potential danger to children. I am also not happy about the fact that the site is adjacent to a large cemetery. There is a far more suitable site to the north of the city, just outside the city boundary. I ask the Minister to convey my comments to

[Mr. Greg Knight]

my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. There are serious objections to the proposed use of the site, and I hope that they will be passed on.

The other matter is of national importance. I am referring to the dangerous and growing use and abuse of crossbows in Britain. An item in today's *Daily Telegraph* is typical of many news reports of the past couple of years. It is headed:

"Probation for Crossbow Attack Man".

The report begins:

"A man who fired a crossbow bolt through a neighbour's leg in a row over water dripping from a balcony in a block of flats was placed on probation for two years and ordered to live in a special hostel by Bromley magistrates yesterday."

That shows the growing menace that innocent people face from the misuse of crossbows. People, pets and animals up and down the country are being injured and are at risk. It was reported to me that a shopkeeper who sells these items made the comment that restrictions are unnecessary because we are talking only about bows and arrows. We are not talking only about bows and arrows. We are talking about a highly sophisticated weapon that is based on a metal frame. In some instances, it can cause damage up to a quarter of a mile away.

It may be said that the misuse of crossbows is to some extent covered by the present law. I accept that the Prevention of Crime Act 1953, for example, makes it an offence to possess any offensive weapon in a public place without lawful authority or reasonable excuse. Furthermore, in many areas local byelaws prohibit the discharge of missiles in a street or public place.

The existing law is attempting to tackle the problem after an offence has been committed. Our law does not always follow this principle. For example, the view is taken that shotguns are so dangerous that the law should seek to prevent offences from being committed by the restriction of ownership. The time has come when the House ought to consider adopting similar measures for crossbows. It is a growing problem.

I ask my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to urge the Home Secretary to treat crossbows in the same manner as shotguns and introduce a licensing system. I accept that a licensing system would impose additional duties on the police and that it would cost money, but a licensing system would do something else. At the very least, it would reduce injury and suffering both to animals and to man. In my view, new restrictions would do more. They would probably save lives.

8.21 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I do not believe that it can altogether be an accident that so many of the subjects that have been raised in this debate relate to the Ministry of Defence. The hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) referred to crossbows. That is an important matter, with which we should be concerned.

I do not think that the House should adjourn without discussing what is happening to the royal ordnance factories. The royal ordnance factory Radway Green was in my constituency until the boundaries were redrawn. It now lies in the constituency of the hon. Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton). That factory has just announced over 600 redundancies. It would be helpful if we could look briefly at what has happened to this factory. It raises a number of very worrying national issues.

The royal ordnance factories were given the impression by the Government before they were privatised that the relationship that existed between them and the Ministry of Defence would be continued. The royal ordnance factory Radway Green, which is in the small arms division but which produces large amounts of ammunition, worked very hard to replace the ammunition stores of the British Army after the Falklands war. Last year it worked extremely hard, including much overtime, which resulted in a considerable amount of stress on its staff, to replace those ammunition stocks. However, it has become very clear in the last few months that the Ministry of Defence has moved away from its previous relationship with the royal ordnance factories in more senses than one.

Three years ago, hardly any orders for bullets or rounds of ammunition were placed outside Britain. However, since then there has been a radical change. Last year very large orders were placed with a number of foreign companies. Doubtless the Ministry of Defence would say that this is because NATO has standardised its ammunition and that value for money can be demonstrated by making purchases abroad. The difficulty about that argument is that the orders have been placed almost entirely—in four out of five cases—with nationalised ammunition factories. For example, orders have been placed with factories in Belgium and Norway which are owned by the Governments of those countries.

When I asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he was convinced about the accuracy of the price for ammunition I was told that it was a very difficult question and that it was one for the individual companies to decide because they are very much concerned with their own internal pricing mechanism.

We are now facing a very dangerous situation. Radway Green is an example of what is happening throughout the royal ordnance factories. For the last two months it has had no orders for ammunition on its order books. The Ministry of Defence ceased negotiations with Radway Green about its new demands for the coming season, with the result that immediately there were 600 redundancies. Unless there is a rapid improvement, Radway Green may face increasing problems. The Ministry of Defence has placed orders in Norway and Belgium and with a private company in Germany that has direct connections with the Flick empire.

When I questioned the Secretary of State about the political thinking behind this policy, he said that this would happen only if British factories were incapable of supplying the ammunition. He also said that the national interest would always be taken into consideration before orders were placed abroad. However, it is clear from the dates on which the orders were signed that this did not apply to the ammunition that was bought from foreign countries.

It will be very dangerous if the royal ordnance factories are being deprived of orders by the Ministry of Defence for political reasons—perhaps to drive down the price before they come on to the market, in order to ensure that when they are sold there will be ready buyers, because they contain a great deal of expensive and efficient machinery that has been paid for by the taxpayer. On a previous occasion the United Kingdom allowed its munitions factories to be run down disastrously while other countries, often using City of London money,

financed their burgeoning munitions factories. The result was a world war which Britain had to fight very hard to win.

I want the Secretary of State to come to the House and make it clear that when he says that he will not regard the royal ordnance factories as commercial units he is sincere. If the deals that he does with the royal ordnance factories are not sufficient to keep the factories viable, Britain will soon be incapable of supplying her own conventional arms needs. Those who do not believe in nuclear weapons have a strong responsibility to make it clear that we believe in the provision of conventional arms to protect this country.

It is ironic that this Government, who refer frequently to their commitment to defence, are apparently prepared to destroy the efficient royal ordnance factories without having any very clear idea of why they are doing so. Hon. Members know that the Leader of the House is a very responsible person and a very honest politician. This is not simply a party political matter. It relates to the provision of proper means of defence for the United Kingdom. If the royal ordnance factories are allowed to go into disuse, or are allowed to become incapable of supplying the British forces with the ammunition that they need, the only conclusion that we shall be able to draw is that the much vaunted patriotism of this Government ends when the quick sale of any asset is involved. That is the danger which we face.

In the future I do not want to come to the House to ask how we will create a system of royal ordnance factories to supply conventional arms to the British forces because so much of the ammunition is made abroad and we no longer control the market or have any efficient or viable way of maintaining our own factories. That is the danger. If the Secretary of State is not aware of it, he should be. He should answer to the House for his present behaviour.

8.30 pm

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): I am sure the House will listen carefully to the serious matters concerning the royal ordnance factories which were mentioned by the right hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). I hope that the Ministry of Defence will give her a full reply.

I do not think the House should adjourn for the Easter recess until it has had an opportunity to debate the appointment of a Committee of both Houses to consider ways of celebrating the tercentenary of the 1688 revolution. I think few people would deny that the revolution which turned James II off the throne and brought in William of Orange and subsequent political changes, including the Bill of Rights, are historical events of first-rate importance which should be suitably commemorated.

No doubt the Committee will raise all kinds of suggestions to celebrate the event. I would suggest that a banquet of both Houses should be held in Westminster Hall. That has not occurred since the coronation of George IV and it would be a much more jolly event than a series of rather ponderous speeches. It is important that we should, from time to time, remember the great events of our history and refresh ourselves from our roots. I shall return to this point later in my speech.

It is important that we should commemorate the events of 1688 in a calm and dispassionate way. We do not want a Whig interpretation of those events, as outlined in Macaulay's history. For a Tory there is a good deal to be sad about what happened in 1688. The legitimate royal line was overthrown in favour of a Dutchman, even though his Stuart wife ruled in name equally with him. A number of the great magnates of the country turned traitor to their king. John Churchill, who later became the Duke of Marlborough, was in charge of the king's army to fight William but then went over to William's side.

On the other hand, we should remember some of the bishops of the Church of England who emerged with great credit, as they refused to swear an oath to William, having sworn an oath of allegiance to James. They were called the non-jurors and they have an honoured place in Anglican history. The main trouble about James II was his fanatical attraction to Roman Catholicism. That led him into all his errors. The rebellion was not, in any sense, the introduction of democracy into these islands.

Indeed, after 1688, the government became more and more of an oligarchy and the power of the Crown to intervene if necessary to protect the poor, as Strafford and Laud had done, was permanently crippled. Disraeli was fond of referring to this aspect of the rebellion. Nevertheless, the rebellion brought to an end the struggle for power between king and Parliament. The monarch remained the chief executive until 1714 when the Hanoverians came here but could not speak English.

Fortunately, the Church of England did not suffer. Although William was a Calvinist, Mary was a keen and devout Anglican, as was her sister, Queen Anne. Even at the time of George II, the Prime Minister, Walpole, was careful not to upset the Tory squires and clergy with regard to the Church by his policy of quieta non movere. Loosely translated, that means, let sleeping dogs lie.

It is important that we should remember these things. The constitution as it developed from 1688, with all its imperfections, and with its basis in the rights of property, was the foundation for Burke's attack, a century later, on the principles of the French revolution, which was based on the absurd notion of abstract rights. Since Burke's time, democracy has been fully developed in our constitution, although whether it has improved the quality of either this House or the other place is a moot point.

It is most important that we should remember that this country has a long and glorious history. We should nurture that and it should inspire us in all that we try to do here. This magnificent building, put up at the height of our power and influence in the 19th century, reminds us of our great past. It is important that we should never forget that past. We are not a new nation, as Germany and Italy are, but an old one. Our long history no doubt gives us that tolerance and poise which foreigners notice as the hallmark of our political stability. To listen to some people talk one would imagine that the political life of the country started only with the Beveridge report or with the Labour Government of 1945. We go back rather longer than that.

The idea of constitutional monarchy has developed in a marvellous way. All executive acts are done in the sovereign's name, but always with a Minister responsible to Parliament. The Queen also represents everybody from the highest to the lowest. That is a powerful force in the cohesion of the nation.

The hereditary peers have also survived, and long may they do so. They represent splendour, ceremony, tradition and, of course, independence. I only wish that in this House we had more representation of the landed interest. We need more squires and fewer lawyers, accountants, bankers, and book-keepers.

[Mr. John Stokes]

What a fortunate nation we are. We should be ever thankful for our constitution. We often need reminding of the pleasure that it brings to us. The celebrations will be extremely valuable. I am sure the Committee will do a good job. I am not in the least put off by the fact that a Pym is chairman, as the earlier Pym is, I gather, only a collateral ancestor. I am sure the present Pym is as good a royalist as any of us here.

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) will have to curb his affection for the Levellers and the Diggers but I am sure that he will also contribute a great deal because of his love of English history. I wish the Committee well and if it wants any help or guidance I am always ready to oblige.

8.38 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I am sure the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr Stokes) will accept my apologies for not following him in his line of thought. I am sure the House found his speech an entertaining interlude.

I support the pleas of the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) that something should be done about crossbows and it should be done quickly. I support my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on the question of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947 and Crown immunity. I also support my right hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) in his plea for some justice for speech therapists.

There are two matters on which I wish to address the Leader of the House. First, during the recess, the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education will announce the closure or proposal to close about 9,000 places in polytechnics and colleges of higher education. I believe that that will cause great consternation. People like myself believe that the Government should not be contemplating reducing places at higher education, that they should be expanding the places in higher education and that there ought to be an early opportunity for this House to debate these proposals.

I am also certain that hon. Members on both sides of the House will wish to make strong pleas about particular courses which are under attack. Therefore, I plead with the Leader of the House, if we cannot have a shorter recess to allow for a debate about the proposals to close places in higher education equivalent to the closure of one substantial polytechnic, to arrange either a statement or a debate as soon as we return after the Easter recess. Many hon. Members will wish to press the principle that there should be no closures, and even more hon. Members, especially Tory Members, will wish to plead that an institution in their constituency or their area should not close.

Some proposals have already leaked out and started to cause consternation. At Wolverhampton polytechnic, there is talk of closing the whole of the engineering course. My hon. Friends the Members for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) and for Wolverhampton South-East (Mr. Edwards) are making strong representations about that. Some people argue that, as the Government have closed so many engineering firms in the midlands, it is logical to close places on courses. However, the whole House will hope that we can rebuild the engineering industry of the west midlands and other areas, and that in the next 20 years we shall need more rather than fewer engineers. I hope that that proposal will be hotly debated, and that the Government can soon announce that it will not go through.

There are proposals to close fine arts courses, which, again, have been serving the nation well recently. It would not be fair to list all the places that are at present threatened, because the proposals will be announced on 4 April, and some of the rumours may be inaccurate. When we return on Tuesday, we shall have education questions, following which I hope that there may be a statement from the Secretary of State for Education and Science about the NAB proposals, so that individual Members can make representations about the principle and particular closures that affect their constituencies.

If the Leader of the House does not make that opportunity available, the Government will probably be pressed for a series of Adjournment debates, and through other procedures of the House. Therefore, it would be for the good order of the House if the Leader of the House could find an opportunity for an early statement on those NAB closures, and a chance for hon. Members to express their complete opposition to the loss of 9,000 places in higher education in 1987-88.

The second topic that I wish to raise relates to a firm in the Stockport area. It is in the constituency of the hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Mr. Arnold), who shares my concern. He was certainly spending a great deal of time yesterday and today trying to talk to the people involved to ensure that the jobs are not lost from his constituency.

As the people who work at Cableform Electrical Engineering of Romiley come from the whole of the Stockport area, I am sure that the Leader of the House will appreciate my concern about the matter. It is particularly alarming that this seems to be another example of financial manipulation, which has nothing to do with the genuine efforts of either the local management or work force. Cableform has been a successful firm in recent years. It has a good profit record, and good employee relations and, until last week, any hon. Member would have been pleased to have the firm in his constituency. Certainly, the people of Stockport were pleased that it offered such good job opportunities.

It appears that the parent company, Contech, got into financial difficulties because of its activities connected with technology in the North sea, and decided to put Cableform up for sale. Last week, assurances were given that a series of bidders would be considered, including a management buy-out bid. It was understood that the bids had to be in by yesterday. People are alarmed and upset because on Friday Contech announced that Fisher Karpark Electrical Engineers from Sowerby Bridge had concluded a preliminary deal, without the other bids being considered, and that a contract of sale to that company would be signed tomorrow. Not only would the sale go ahead without the consideration of the other bids, but it would result in the loss of all the jobs at Romiley, the closure of the factory and the transfer of the work to Sowerby Bridge.

I appreciate that the people in Sowerby Bridge would like to have those jobs, but I am sure that the Leader of the House will appreciate the considerable concern of the people in Stockport that, as a result of financial dealings, a successful company can be plucked from Stockport and moved elsewhere. Certainly all the hon. Members for the Stockport area are extremely alarmed at that proposal going ahead, especially in view of the fact that the

directors of Contech seem to have neglected their duties under the Companies Acts at least to take employees into account. Indeed, some would argue that they have failed to take into account even shareholders' genuine interests in quickly concluding a deal with Fisher Karpark Ltd. without waiting, as they had originally intended, to consider alternative bids.

I hope that the Leader of the House can give us assurances that the Department of Trade and Industry will look carefully at the matter, to see whether the Companies Acts have been observed. I hope that the Department of Employment will consider the implications of the sale, since I understand that notices of redundancy have been issued, and there should now be 90 days of discussion. It appears that those 90 days will be a complete farce because I am assured that in the agreement between Contech and Fisher Karpark it is proposed that, once the factory is empty of work, it could be sold back to Contech for some other activity.

I am sure that the Leader of the House will wish to consider the matter carefully. I assure him that the hon. Member for Hazel Grove and I are anxious to meet the management of Fisher Karpark and Contech to ensure that the jobs remain in Stockport, and that the people who have been working efficiently and loyally for the company are not thrown onto the scrap heap and the work transferred elsewhere.

8.47 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): I hope that the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) will forgive me if I do not comment on or follow what he said. He will appreciate that he has been making some constituency points, and I intend to do likewise.

I apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House because I am aware that this is the third occasion on which I have raised a particular constituency matter—that is, the NIREX proposal to site a nuclear waste dump in my constituency. You will recall that I had the opportunity to speak to the House during the Consolidated Fund debate, when I made it clear that my constituents are implacably opposed to the proposal. They are opposed on three grounds, and I shall summarise them briefly, because I have elaborated on them previously.

First, we do not believe that it is right, proper, safe or appropriate to dispose of intermediate-level nuclear waste, albeit of the short-life type, in a near-surface disposal facility. Secondly, we do not believe that the geological and hydrological properties to be found at Fulbeck make the site appropriate. Thirdly, we believe that the road network will make the safe transport of the material impossible.

I have made those points before and I should like to emphasise them tonight. I know that a similar approach is adopted by my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) who shares my views on this matter. I should not be in the least surprised if my hon. Friend sought to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to make his observations.

Since I had the opportunity of speaking about this matter during the Consolidated Fund debate, two particular points have arisen which require some consideration. The first is financial loss. It is important to realise that my constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes are suffering real financial loss. When a person seeks to sell a property he may find that, as a direct result of the NIREX announcement, he is unable to sell that property at all or at its full price. My constituents and those of my hon. Friend are therefore suffering substantial financial loss. Society has no policy to deal with that loss, as NIREX is not under a statutory duty to compensate, and there is no other authority to which my constituents can go.

My constituents are suffering financial loss through no fault of their own, and the House must, as a matter of urgency, discuss what can be done to help people suffering in these circumstances. My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes and I are corresponding with the chairman of NIREX in an attempt to agree upon compensation schemes. I am sure my hon. Friend will agree that that is an inadequate approach, and we will in due time be pressing for a proper compensation scheme, if necessary backed by the authority of the House.

My other point is a more narrow one. The spokesman for NIREX has made it clear that the road transport communications for Fulbeck are inadequate and that, unless a great deal of public money is spent on upgrading those roads, there is no possibility of NIREX using Fulbeck. My constituents and I are extremely angry to learn that intense anxiety, concern and fear have been caused, when it now seems that the road transport system is inadequate even in the view of NIREX. I wonder whether NIREX is behaving in a responsible fashion. The hostility to these proposals in Lincolnshire is intense, it spans all parties, and it is implacable, and I hope that it succeeds in defeating the proposals.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will be able to help me on one or two matters. As he will know, about three weeks ago the Select Committee on the Environment published a report on the disposal of nuclear waste. There were a number of conclusions in that report, some of which do not directly touch on the matter that I am raising. Some, however, do.

First, the Select Committee reports that there is no urgency for a new facility. We know that the low-level material can continue to be disposed of at Drigg at least until the turn of the century, and probably beyond, especially if the modern technologies of incineration and compaction are more widely used. Moreover, the intermediate-level waste can continue to be stored where it is—on the stations and plants which produce it. There is, therefore no urgency.

Secondly, and perhaps most important, the Select Committee states in terms that a near-surface disposal facility—or if I may call it this, a dump—is not an appropriate way of disposing of intermediate-level waste, whether short-lived or long-lived. Yet NIREX is proposing to dispose of intermediate level waste in such a facility. NIREX is going in the face of the recommendations of the Select Committee report in the central feature of its policy.

The Select Committee makes it clear that the nuclear industry has not pursued a policy of sustained research into methods of disposing of these classes of material. That is one of the most serious criticisms of the industry that I have yet heard in a responsible publication.

We all know, and the Select Committee revealed, that there are other viable alternative methods of disposing of such material, notably in deep geological sites on land or in the sea bed. I should like my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to help me at this point. On any view

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

of the matter, the Select Committee has produced a report which contains conclusions which require and demand a detailed considered response. It seems to all of us concerned to be wrong that we should contemplate the possibility of having to debate the special development order before we have had an opportunity to debate the Select Committee's findings.

I would put it more strongly than that. This country, my constituents and the House will not understand how we can properly debate the special development order until the Select Committee report has been considered in detail by the Government, the Department and the nuclear industry, or before the House has considered, not just the report but the Government's and the industry's response to it. We could not justify such a course of action to our constituents. How can I tell my constituents that we are right to debate a special development order before we have considered the Select Committee's report? That is not possible, it would not be right, and my constituents would be right not to accept that.

It is imperative to a proper discussion of these special developments orders—should we reach that stage; on other occasions I shall seek to persuade my right hon. Friend not to reach that point—that we leave ample time to debate the Select Committee report in the context of a full and reasoned response by the Government, Departments and the nuclear industry. That is the request that I make to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House tonight.

8.58 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Deus ex machina, the Leader of the House should go to the Ministry of Defence tomorrow morning, judging by the number of contributions pertaining to that Department. If he is the senior Cabinet Minister in the pecking order, he should summon the Secretary of State for Defence to his room.

The first defence issue can be dealt with rapidly, because it was covered by my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley). Like him, I have been in contact with Mr. and Mrs. Mills. The tragic death of their son in possibly negligent circumstances in the Falklands makes revision of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947 imperative. I leave it at that, because my right hon. Friend put the case eloquently.

On a second topic, I make no apology for returning to the case of Mr. Clarence Robinson, which I raised after 1 am in the debate on the Consolidated Fund Bill, and to the strategic defence initiative research.

First, what is the Government's view of the activities of Clarence Robinson, whose visit to Britain at the beginning of March was discussed on the Floor of the House, and especially of his attempt to suggest that his stay here was sponsored by British Aerospace? Secondly, what do the Government think in the light of Clarence Robinson's apparent duplicity in using the hospitality of British Aerospace to suggest that this lent him the necessary credibility to visit other firms, such as GEC-Marconi, to discuss classified research work which had already been denied to him? Those are not the actions of a simple innocent tourist. Mr. Clarence Robinson has a relationship with the Pentagon and the Government of the United States.

Thirdly, was Mr. George Gallagher-Daggitt, as the director with responsibility for university and research councils in the SDI organisation, correct in stating that academics taking part in the SDI innovative science and technology programme would retain the freedom to publish their research and that the opening exchange of scientific views would continue? Alternatively, was the spokesman for the United States embassy correct in describing the classification process, based on military critical review technology, as one which would deny freedom to publish research and would preclude the free and open exchange of scientific ideas? Both could not be right. Either the United States embassy or the senior official attached to both the Ministry of Defence and to the Department of Education and Science, presumably speaking for the British Government, was correct.

How much money can British academics hope to obtain from the United States SDIO's innovative science technology programme? Is it a little, as stated by George Gallagher-Daggitt, or is it a lot, as our leading universities appear to imagine?

Fourthly, does the deal between Westland Helicopters and United Technologies allow for the world-leading technology of Westland's research into composite materials to be permanently removed from the United Kingdom for the sole use of United Technologies to further its aspirations to secure SDI research contracts with that same technology?

Fifthly, were the Prime Minister and the Government informed and has approval been given for discussion of the detailed and classified items from the memorandum of understanding by the strategic defence initiative organisation meeting in Washington today on Tuesday 25 March? Was permission sought from the Secretary of State for Defence by the Government or by the United States to discuss the contents of the memorandum of understanding at that seminar in Washington today?

Sixthly, what practical reason can the Secretary of State for Defence now provide for not publishing the memorandum of understanding and for not allowing a full and proper debate on the commercial, legal and diplomatic issues which it raises, now that the SDIO has taken a unilateral decision to discuss the contents of that agreement and what purports to be a private meeting with British companies in Washington—the terms under the export of goods control order and extra-territoriality?

Seventhly, will the Secretary of State for Defence eventually tell the House what are the specific arrangements outlined in the memorandum of understanding which cover the following issues, all of which I understand are being discussed in Washington at the meeting today: first, the security procedure; secondly, the administration of contracts; thirdly, the limitations of the memorandum of understanding; fourthly, the right for Anglo-American partners within the SDI programme to attend conferences together; fifthly, the arrangements which must be made for face-to-face meetings; sixthly, any other administrative procedures with a bearing on security or on the classification of research and development work; seventhly, the intellectual property rights; eighthly, the national and international trade laws; ninthly, the requirement for Government guarantees to underwrite SDI research; and, tenthly, any penalty clauses attendant on the award of SDI research contracts.

Eighthly, will the Secretary of State for Defence say whether he has taken any action, and what was that action,

to quell the fears of the British research community that participation in SDI will in the near future have detrimental effects on the free access to scientific research and collaboration in development, free trade in high technology products and the freedom of individuals to discuss scientific and technical ideas?

Ninthly, does the Ministry of Defence have any plans to publish parts of the memorandum of understanding in the form of a commercial guide for British firms participating in SDI?

I have been very precise and very detailed. I do not apologise to the House at all, because this is a matter of gargantuan importance. I am glad that the Leader of the House is nodding in agreement, because, whatever may be the differences between the Government and their critics, of whom I am one, I do not think that either of us would in any way underestimate the vast importance of what is loosely called star wars, although I prefer to stick to technical terms.

I wish to raise another matter which I first raised in the form of a parliamentary question on 18 December 1985. I asked the Secretary of State for Defence

"what financial payment his Department is making to Mr. Jim Smith following disclosures by him to the Department which led to £400,000 excess profits being recovered by the Department in respect of defence contracts placed with his then employer; and if he will make a statement."—[*Official Report*, 18 December 1985; Vol. 89, c. *215*.]

To save time, I shall not go over the detailed answers.

The issue here is: what are the Government's obligations to what are loosely called whistle blowers? I refer to a number of press cuttings to establish the view that this is not an esoteric interest. On 16 December 1985 Mr. Richard Norton-Taylor, writing in *The Guardian*, said:

"The principle that whistle-blowers should be compensated is recognised in some cases by the Inland Revenue, which can reward people for information about companies or other individuals."

Mr. Stephen Bates, writing in the *Daily Telegraph* two days before Christmas, on 23 December, said of Mr. Jim Smith:

"The Ministry praised him for his 'public spirited co-operation' in its post-costing operation with Aish, which has repaid £421,000 but has refused to consider compensating Mr. Smith for the loss of his job. He is on the dole and is having to sell his house in Camford Cliffs, Dorset."

On 30 November, an article in *The Economist*, under the heading

"Thanks ever so, Mr. Smith",

ended by saying:

"The Ministry's policy is not likely to win over many other prospective whistle blowers. If it wants people to risk their jobs to safeguard the public purse it had better stand ready to compensate those who lose thereby with something more than hot air."

Again in *The Guardian*, on 21 December, it was reported that Sir Gordon Downey, the Comptroller and Auditor General—as a former member of the Public Accounts Committee, I always take Comptrollers and Auditors General seriously—told the Committee:

"Mr. Smith's allegations clearly had a significant impact on the volume and effectiveness of the MoD's post-costing activity with this firm."

The basic story is that Jim Smith tried to stop Aish bluntly ripping off the Ministry of Defence by subtle accounting methods introduced to the company by a new executive. Jim Smith was sacked in the middle of a board meeting when he refused to agree to what looked like being a fiddle of accounts. The next day he passed to the Ministry of Defence all the information about what he saw as a racket. He sued for unfair dismissal and lost in a nasty case of miscarriage of justice. The tribunal made it clear that it found against him because there was no evidence, so it said, of excess profits. But at the same time the Ministry of Defence accountants, who had been helped by Jim Smith, had exposed huge excess profits. Later, £400,000 was paid back by the company and it agreed not to charge another £350,000 which it had originally asked for. Now, almost every week more slabs of money are being paid back to the taxpayer.

Meanwhile, Jim Smith, who brought the situation about, found his business collapsing. He worked as a consultant in a close-knit circle of people who understand defence accounting. One by one, for their own reasons, they started to desert him. Work from the Ministry and from the defence industry around the Ministry dried up. Almost at once he found himself without an income. He had been used to a high income and had a big mortgage which he could not pay. Now he faces eviction and all sorts of illness and family problems.

I come to a matter which should, I think, concern colleagues of all parties. I am informed that the Treasury has said that it would consider a recommendation for compensation if it came from the Ministry of Defence. No one knows better than the Leader of the House how careful the Treasury can be. Will he find out from the Treasury —I shall put down a parliamentary question to establish it—whether my information is correct and precisely the terms in which the Treasury has said, or has been alleged to say, to the Ministry of Defence that it would consider a recommendation for compensation?

I understand that the Ministry of Defence absolutely refuses to pay a penny. It now claims that Jim Smith did not tell it at once about the excess profits and is producing all sorts of things—the worst is lies—from Ministry officials to substantiate its claim. I put against that what is in public print from the Comptroller and Auditor General, Sir Gordon Downey. Why should the Ministry be so uncharitable to a man who has saved it £1 million or more and in the process has exposed the way in which other contractors may well be fiddling their profits?

Will the Leader of the House tackle the Secretary of State for Defence about the actions in this matter of his Ministry's arms sales directorate and the way it has worked on the key contracts committee of the Defence Manufacturers Association? On that association, was there any director of Aish? Bluntly, could it be that the arms sales directorate is in some way protecting its friends and an industry which would be heavily exposed if people like Jim Smith were encouraged to come forward? While Smith is in the mire, others like him might be discouraged and malpractices would go on.

I recollect that in 1974 Alan Grimshaw came to Parliament to tell us about malpractice in the National Coal Board, then under the chairmanship of Lord Robens. His information was certainly used to save the board about £7 million, but the coal board sacked Grimshaw and he died a few years later in poverty and bitterness. He was a decent man and the way he was treated was a disgrace to Parliament. Parliament owes something to Jim Smith and to those who are prepared to stand up for the public interest.

Mr. Paul Foot writes:

"Jim Smith is a brilliant and honest accountant. He helped to save the taxpayer three quarters of a million pounds by telling

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

the truth about the company he worked for. He's been rewarded with an offer of supplementary benefit, and is being forced to sell his house."

In *The Mirror* of 6 February the story was repeated.

I must tell the Leader of the House that I have been rather careful about this matter. In making a speech of this kind one does not simply rely on one, two or even three sources of information. I have been worried about the matter for some time, ever since before Christmas, when I started putting questions. It raises a broader question about the way in which civil servants and those who work for the public service and are concerned with the public interest are treated by this House.

This is neither the time nor the place to go into all the lessons of the trial at the Old Bailey 13 months ago of Clive Ponting. One of the lessons I learned from it is that there should be some board outside the Civil Service to which those who are either in the Civil Service or have relations in it can go. One step would be to make the head of the Civil Service rather different from the Cabinet Secretary, because the juxtaposition of those two jobs is deeply unsatisfactory.

In the absence of a really independent head of the Home Civil Service there ought to be some board organisation —all right, consisting of retired mandarins or people who know—to which someone in difficulty, like Jim Smith or Clive Ponting, could go to explain his side of the story. The Labour party is now committed to such a board or organisation. I want to know tonight and in the coming weeks whether the Leader of the House thinks that the House of Commons has given proper treatment to Jim Smith in the light of the service that he performed for this nation.

9.18 pm

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): I listened riveted to the story of Jim Smith told by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). It is slightly within my knowledge, because I am a member of the Public Accounts Committee. I wish him well in his pursuit of the case.

I want to raise another matter which, like that raised by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), arises in a neighbouring constituency but which is now of major concern to all the members of the local authority, in my case in Manchester, not Stockport. The matter has now become one of national concern. I refer to the situation at the Poundswick school in Manchester.

Let me refresh the memory of the House. Hon. Members will simply know of this matter as the graffiti case. The trouble with this case, like so many, is that it hit the headlines and then disappeared. Such cases are a matter of interest for a few moments. People take a glancing interest, make a few speeches, have a demonstration and then the matter goes away. But the people who are affected have to go on and bear the burden. In this case that burden is still being borne to this day.

I wish to bring the matter to the attention of the House before we rise because it is rather urgent and Easter is crucial in the story. The story began on 18 June last year when there was some grossly obscene graffiti, so obscene that it has never been published and is simply passed around from hand to hand, that made remarks about members of staff and their families. It was carefully planned, some of it being written backwards so that it would be seen through the windows outside, and most of it was of enormous size.

Five pupils admitted to the headmaster that they were responsible. The governors of the school investigated the matter and agreed with the headmaster that the pupils should be sent away. The local authority overturned that decision. As a result of the local authority's decision, teachers refused to teach the five pupils. That was the beginning of a long-running dispute.

It is impossible to describe to the House the effect that that has had on the school. The school has been totally ruined. The boys concerned were in the fifth year and the latest data that I have, which are from March, show that the number of pupils attending in the fifth year is 6 per cent. of the total. But the effect goes throughout the school. Fifteen per cent. of the fourth year are attending; 36 per cent. or one third, of the third year; 58 per cent. of the second year; and only 71 per cent. of the first year. It can be seen that the effect of the dispute has ricocheted throughout the school and has had a devastating effect.

Alas, there is more to it than that. The local authority caused this trouble. I make no bones about saying that there is a strong political element in it. Leaving that on one side, it made its position known and that was the bed that it had to lie on. For a long time, the battle raged and the unions refused to allow the teachers to teach. At the end of last year an agreement was reached with the National Union of Teachers and one of the other unions that the teachers would go back. The condition on which they were to go back was that they would not have to teach the five boys.

That sounds wonderful, until it is realised that the five boys were sitting in the classroom with a number of other children. The local authority was signing an agreement with its own teachers saying that the pupils in their care were no longer, by remit of the local authority, to be taught by their own teachers. In other words, because the five boys were going to turn up—nine councillors turned up at the gates to make sure that they did turn up—the other pupils in the classes were not to be taught. That, by any standards—I am delighted to see that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) has joined us—is disgraceful.

I urge the House to consider where we go from here. I put down a question to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science, which he answered on Monday, asking him to intervene or to do something to put the matter right. His reply, which I half expected, was that it is a local authority matter and he cannot intervene. I would question that, and the matter is now extremely urgent. I would question it because a local authority has the duty to provide education for the pupils in its area.

Of course, we all know that if there is a normal dispute certain circumstances will arise. But this is not a normal industrial dispute. It is a situation in which the local authority itself has put its hand to an agreement by which it deliberately excludes certain of its pupils from proper teaching.

A number of suggestions have been made: that the boys should be taught elsewhere; that special private tuition should be given to them. Obstinately, they refuse to consider them. They say that they wish to go to the school and to hell with the other pupils who are left outside. They say that the other union, which is the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers, which has

refused to go along with this agreement, should go along with it. If it did, the net effect would be that 177 of Manchester's pupils in the fifth year would not be receiving full-time education, by a ruling of their own local authority.

This is a matter of grave concern not only to Manchester, but to the whole of the education service. The Secretary of State has a duty to ensure that the local authority does not operate in this manner. It is particularly urgent and particularly sad because, as my hon. Friend will recognise, the fifth year is the most crucial for many schoolchildren. They will be taking their examinations this year.

Two things happen between now and the examination period. One is that, on 23 May, it is usual for fifth formers to leave school. That is quite normal, but they have the right to stay on until the end of July. So far, the local authority has refused to make any statement as to whether it will enforce the 23 May date. The effect will be that those teachers who are now out will not be able to take part in the planning for next year, so that the effects of this dispute will go on not only through the current academic year but into next year as well.

More important — I urge my hon. Friend, if he possibly can, to use his good offices to solve this problem — if those children in the fifth year, despite all the problems that they have had and all the efforts at studying at home and in other ways, turn up for those examinations and one of the five boys appears in the same room, all the teachers invigilating — not only members of the NAS/UWT, but all of them—will leave and the examinations for all those pupils will not take place.

There has to be a way of solving that, if nothing else, and I urge my right hon. Friend, before we rise for Easter, to have a word with his right hon. Friend so that something is done about it.

9.28 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester) will forgive me if I do not follow his remarks, but of course the issue that he has raised is one that has hit the national headlines and we are all deeply concerned, like him, that there should be a solution to that very difficult problem.

I want, to follow the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), because he and I, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Wakeham) have had a bombshell dropped upon our constituents in the form of the announcement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 25 February that we were to be the subject of a special development order to be laid before the House after the Easter recess which would foreshadow the possibility of our four constituencies being subjected to test drilling with a view to finding out whether one of them would be suitable for the dumping of nuclear waste.

In the case of my own constituency, the bombshell was dropped somewhat earlier than 25 February, because I found out in May last year that it was the intention of NIREX to recommend to the Secretary of State that my constituency should be included in that list.

I was not idle between last May and 25 February last year. I made several attempts to find out from my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Department of the Environment whether the rumour that we had heard last May was true, but they refused to confirm or deny that rumour. The rumour became fact. I have to say that when I hear rumours about possible action to be taken by the Government or Government agencies in my constituency that is likely adversely to affect it, whereas in the past I was prepared to dismiss such rumours as idle speculation, I shall err on the side of believing them.

The argument against South Killingholme being chosen as a nuclear dump is similar to the argument aganst the use of Fulbeck, Colchester, South and Maldon and Mid-Bedfordshire. All those sites have good reasons for not being a nuclear dump. They all have special characteristics. I know three of the sites well for the simple reason, as I have said before, that when I make my weekly return journey from my house to this House, I pass through the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham and within a mile of the village of Fulbeck. I am usually on side roads and going slowly, and I take the point that my hon. Friend made about the roads in his constituency. I drive through the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire, and he is right to draw attention to the density of population there.

I draw the attention of Ministers in the Department of Environment to the fact that South Killingholme has two oil refineries, is already housing, below ground, some several thousand gallons of liquid petroleum gas and is a village alongside the Humber bank that has more than its fair share of hazardous industries. I know that it could be said by Department of the Environment Ministers and NIREX—not publicly but privately—that as the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes has a constituency that is already a rubbish dump for the dangerous and hazardous materials produced in it, and he has already had the misfortune to represent, in his former constituency, the village of Flixborough, he can jolly well put up with the naming of the site.

The naming of South Killingholme as a site was based not on any reasons of geology or logic, but on one fact. The Central Electricity Generating Board happens to own a piece of dead land in my constituency for which it has no other use. It happens to be, by coincidence, a major shareholder in NIREX. It intimated to NIREX that it had no other use for the land, and that it would make a good rubbish dump for nuclear waste.

Rehearsing constituency points is for another occasion, but I wish to concentrate the attention of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House on the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham, that since the statement of 25 February there have been developments in the House with the publication of the report of the Select Committee on the Environment. My right hon. Friend shares a concern and responsibility for the Select Committee system. My hon. Friend the Member for Grantham said that it would not be understood in our four constituencies how it could be possible, at the end of April, for a special development order to be laid before the House, before the conclusions of the report have been considered by Ministers, NIREX, hon. Members and our constituents. It would make a mockery of the whole Select Committee procedure. It is a major report, very highly regarded on both sides of the House and chaired by an hon. Member who is well regarded by everybody. When he puts his name to a report of this kind it carries a certain honour and integrity.

[Mr. Michael Brown]

Therefore, it is not simply a Select Committee report attacking the Government for party political purposes, to be tossed on one side; it is a report that concerns every hon. Member because the constituency of every hon. Member could have been a target. I am sure that every hon. Member, if the chips were down, would not be able to recommend to his constituents the dumping of nuclear waste in his constituency.

The Select Committee report cuts across all party lines and brings to the House and the country certain very important conclusions. I want to draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to some of the conclusions in the report, specifically paragraph 280, where the report states:

"We therefore recommend that site selection criteria should be established in advance and published for each type of waste disposal route likely to be developed. Thereafter, the Department of the Environment should ensure that any possible future disposal sites identified by NIREX should satisfy the site selection criteria for that disposal option. Thus responsibility for final 'short-listing' of possible future sites should effectively rest with the Department of the Environment rather than NIREX".

My argument with my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Department of the Environment is that they constantly tell me that the selection of my constituency was nothing to do with them and that it was a matter for NIREX. However, the Select Committee report states that it is the Department of the Environment which should take the responsibility for site selection.

I think that it would be wholly reprehensible for our Select Committee system if we were to have a special development order laid before the House which flies in the face of the evidence and recommendations made in the Select Committee report.

I ask my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to respond not to passion—although we can adduce, and have adduced, passion — but to the cold logic put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham and supported by myself. The case against a special development order for our four constituencies is arguable and we shall argue against it. However, the case against laying the special development order before the House before Ministers have had time to consider the report and their response to it is unanswerable.

9.38 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) will experience, as I once did, the tremendous relief of learning that NIREX is no longer interested in his constituency. I say that not only because of my concern for his constituents—although if not his constituents, inevitably somebody else's, would suffer—but because my hon. Friend has made such a signal contribution to our debates on many subjects and it would be a real tragedy to lose him, for however brief a time.

I seek to stop the rising of the House before a commitment by the Government — either before the Easter recess, or we may be able to delay it until the recess on 5 May — to more flexible licensing hours and a commitment to action in the next Session of Parliament. The present law was designed to meet social and economic conditions during the first world war and shortly afterwards. That was in the days of the horse and cart: a time of war, when work patterns were quite different from those of today. Public attitudes and desires were then very different, but we are now in the 1980s.

As time is short, I shall make two brief but important points in explaining why the time for change has come. First, there is now too much unemployment. More flexible licensing hours would lead to the creation of more jobs in, for example, the brewing industry, restaurants, public houses and hotels, and in the tourist industry generally. After all, if we had more reasonable licensing laws—foreigners and many of us see them as unreasonable—many more people would be attracted to this country. We do not need to gaze into any crystal balls, because we actually liberated the Scots in the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976. That Act introduced wide flexibility. It is interesting to note that as a result, one in three public houses has taken on extra staff, and 1,500 more people have been employed.

If the same pattern was followed in England and Wales, we could be reasonably sure that at least 15,000 new jobs would be created, together with a further 5,000 new jobs in restaurants. There would be increased capital investment, which would lead, in turn, to more equipment and services. As a result, more people would be employed in producing those services. In Scotland, the services have improved through, and since, that legislation. More food is provided in Scottish public houses and other tourist spots. There are better amenities too. Such facilities would provide, of course, more work in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Secondly, more flexible licensing hours would reduce drunkenness, and therefore crime. The figures published by the Scottish Office and the Home Office in 1984 show that, in Scotland, offences of drunkenness fell by 41 per cent. during the past five years for all age groups, compared with a fall of only 9 per cent. in England and Wales. For the younger age groups, the under-21s, where the greatest problem exists, offences of drunkenness in Scotland were down by 49 per cent.—almost a half—while in England they fell by only 12 per cent. Of course, that is not solely due to licensing changes. Many other factors were involved, including the slight depression in the economy in that part of the world, which cannot be gainsaid.

However, it is clear that, since the Licensing (Scotland) Act and the abolition of strict licensing controls in Scotland, there has been no deterioration in that great country's moral fibre, and no increase in crime. That is why many chief constables now support the view that flexible licensing hours would help to reduce public order problems. For a Government who are so concerned about public order and respect for the law, that must be a very telling point.

I will not delay the House, which is anxious for the next business, with my formula for reform. However, the Brewers' Society has proposed a very reasonable formula which retains complete control by the licensing justices, as everyone of good sense would wish. I call only for a commitment in principle. A commitment would be popular not just with brewers, licensees, managers, the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board but with the people in this country. It would be in line wth the recommendation made by the Erroll committee 14 years ago. It would be in accord with modern social requirements. It would provide jobs and reduce crime. It would be consistent with the Conservative party's

principle of restoring freedom with responsibility where we can. Because of all this, it would find support in the whole House.

In the past, a very small number of hon. Members resisted such changes because they believed that any relaxation in the law would lead us into the arms of the demon drink himself. Governments have not had the courage to face up to that minority, and the law has not been changed. Now, at last, we have a Government full of conservative principles, good sense and courage. I call for a commitment that will put cheer into the glasses of most of us in this country this Easter adjournment, and especially of those who will be drinking cheerfully in the public houses and the businesses of Burton on Trent—the brewing centre of England.

9.47 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I thank the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) for the punctual conclusion to his speech. He spoke with a consuming and, I suspect, a consumer's passion. He seems to see flexible licensing rules as a social panacea. It seems that there is no problem facing this country that would not be resolved at a stroke and I am sure, therefore, that suggestion was noted with great interest by the Leader of the House. However, being of a mildly cynical disposition I am forced to note that we in the House already enjoy that privilege. The trouble is that I am not sure that our example convinces any of the doubters, inside or outside the House.

The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) spoke with an understandable passion that would have been shared by any hon. Member who found himself confronted by what the hon. Gentleman rightly described as the bombshell that he and his hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) and others had to face in the recent announcement. The easy energy source of the nuclear world is another panacea, but there is a tendency to overlook the inconvenient fact that the resulting waste is slightly different from coal ash or the residue from oil-burning. The hon. Member for Grantham outlined the problem of housing blight. Although a real problem, it is, sadly, probably one of the least of the problems besetting all our constituents.

Most hon. Members probably share the hon. Gentleman feelings, because we could all be in the same position. The hon. Gentleman made the point that it would be an abuse of logic for us to debate the special development order before debating the report of the Select Committee and hearing the Government's response to that report. I hope that the Leader of the House will feel able to accept that clear and overwhelming case.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), with his innate capability for asking searching questions—I doubt whether there is any other hon. Member who researches his speeches in more detail than does he—referred to Mr. Jim Smith. He made sure of his facts. He not only checked his facts; he double-checked and treble-checked as many sources as possible. If I understood the reactions of hon. Members, there was a general feeling in the House that he has drawn attention yet again to a case where there has been real abuse.

When somebody has saved the Ministry of Defence between £420,000 and £1 million, it is something of an ingratitude for the Ministry to sit back and let the man lose his job. He is on the dole and he has been forced to sell his house, but the Ministry refuses to offer any compensation to him, despite the fact that the Comptroller and Auditor General appears to have substantiated my hon. Friend's points. This is a positive deterrent to similar disclosures and therefore to similar savings of public money in the future. The whole House ought to want to ensure that this matter is properly investigated.

My hon. Friend also asked questions about past and present events relating to the strategic defence initiative. I have little doubt that in the time that is available to him the Leader of the House will ensure that all my hon. Friend's questions are fully and adequately answered.

My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) referred, rightly, to the fact that, when all our competitors realise the importance of education and training in this age of high technology, we are, unbelievably, cutting back on the resources that we are willing to devote to education and training. The Confederation of British Industry and industry generally are pleading with the Government and saying that there is a desperate shortage of skills, but in 1987-88 the Government intend to reduce the number of places in higher education by 9,000. They are also abandoning the Robbins principle.

The hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) who was in his place a moment ago but who has now left the Chamber, although he is normally punctilious about being in the House for wind-up speeches, referred to the establishment of a Committee for the tercentenary celebrations of the events of 1688. I noted that his adulation of the hereditary peerage savoured of the defence of illegitimate legitimacy. That marked his analysis of the development of the great families of this country.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), who apologises for the fact that he is unable to be here at this stage, raised an important point which had considerable support on all sides of the House—the fact that service men cannot sue for negligence. Most hon. Members will have had experience of cases of this kind. My right hon. Friend asked me to make it clear to the House that he was not referring to negligence during wartime. In many of his speeches, including the speech on his early-day motion, he made it clear that he was referring to non-combatant duties. He understands the difficulties that would arise in wartime. However, he rightly ridiculed the pathetic arguments that have been raised by the Ministry of Defence against the abolition of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): I know that my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester) is aware of the very deep and genuine anxieties, on both sides of the House, about the future of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill. Would it not be quite wrong for us to approve this motion before hearing from the Leader of the House about the Government's intentions as to that Bill? My right hon. Friend appreciates that I did not hear most of the speech of the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester) on a matter that directly concerns me. As my right hon. Friend appreciates, I have been frequently in touch with the Secretary of State on the matter about which I have also tabled parliamentary questions. I saw the deputation from

[Mr. Alfred Morris]

Poundswick when they came to Parliament, but I understand that no Minister from the Department of Education and Science was able to do so.

Mr. Williams: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). On the last point, it is normal courtesy in the House to notify an hon. Member if an issue is raised which relates to his constituency. That is obviously a matter for my right hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Withington. That courtesy is normally extended by hon. Members to one another and I am sure it was an inadvertent oversight on the part of the hon. Member for Withington.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe raised the question of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill. There is grave disquiet in the country about the Government's intentions, especially among those organisations which represent disabled people. The Leader of the House should accept that we should see it as unacceptable for the Government not to announce what their intentions are at this stage in relation to the legislation. It is legislation which all those organisations which are involved with disabled people and those who have disabled people in their families, recognise as timely, humane and much needed.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) presented a case, with substantial evidence to support it, of the persecution of 35,000 Nepalese Christians. The House would always condemn intolerance, inhumanity and untruths of the type described, as we would condemn them anywhere they occur. The House looks with particular affection to Nepal because of the debt of gratitude that we have always felt and owed to the Gurkhas for the support they have given us in many campaigns for many years. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Mossley Hill for giving us the opportunity to learn about this case.

The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) touched on an infuriating situation — the inadequacy of disciplinary procedures within all the professions, but in this particular case in relation to the medical profession. He pinpointed the General Medical Council's limited powers of discipline. He pointed to the need for wider powers and for intermediary powers and sanctions to deal with a wider range of cases than can be dealt with at present. I share his sense of the preposterous with regard to the arguments that were advanced by the GMC against the private Member's Bill which is coming forward. The Council's argument was nonsense and the hon. Gentleman has done a service in focusing attention on it.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) opened the debate and dealt with the case of speech therapists. I am sure most Members have received representations on this issue and most of us recognise the dedication and ability of this specialist group within the National Health Service. We feel it is appalling that they are rewarded so inadequately for their critical and demanding work.

I am not sure whether I want this particular term to end. It has been a rather entertaining couple of weeks. The Government started back from Christmas still in the pantomime mood. Even in the weeks before we started back, they were leaking letters left, right and centre. We had the entertaining back-stabbing camaraderie of the Cabinet room. We had resignations, protestations and denials. We had "hunt the letter" and all manner of amusing, entertaining festive games, here on the Floor of the House.

In keeping with this atmosphere of buffoonery we had the behaviour of the Secretary of State for Transport. He is always good at joining in a situation of that sort and he gives value in that context. Therefore, understandably, he also popped up halfway through the period to be found guilty in the courts on a third occasion of abusing the laws and imposing illegal tolls on those of us who must use the Severn bridge.

To ensure that no Government foot remained uninjured, we have had several weeks of the British Leyland saga — the Government's attempt to sell to the very American companies which since 1978 have contributed to nearly all the extra import penetration that our car industry has faced——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Motion for the Adjournment (Easter and Monday 5th May) and the Lords Amendments to the Local Government Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

Adjournment (Easter and May Day)

Question again proposed.

Mr. Williams: I am sorry. I thought that I might have talked the debate out. *[Interruption.]* It is one of the few occasions on which a Whip has given me good advice. It may be symptomatic that it is not a Labour Whip.

We have had an entertaining period, which makes me recognise with some regret that we are about to go down for holidays. Nevertheless, I live in hope. One shining opportunity was raised by the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham). He raised hopes that these glorious, delightful moments that we have all shared in the weeks since Christmas will be revived when we come to the Shops Bill. He asked the Government what concessions they would make because it would be a matter of great difficulty for them. That makes me savour the prospect of a renewal of internal Government hostilities on the other side of our recess.

10.1 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I should like to thank the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) for reminding us how the modest difficulties concerning Westland are already so far behind us that we could almost be in another Parliament, let alone in another year. All the other difficulties will be put in a wholly revealing context as the economy proceeds, the success of Fulham are consolidated in the local authority elections, and the Labour party consoles itself with the new great ideological inquests that it must have as, once again, Socialism is rejected by the country. However, it is not the purpose of this mini debate on the most innocuous resolution that we should take a few days off at Easter to engage in that sort of contentious politics. Rather, it is my privilege to respond briefly, but comprehensively, to the questions raised.

I shall start with the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin), who explained the reasons for his absence. In all quarters of the House there will be great sympathy with the cause of speech therapists. I understand that they have now presented a claim which is with the management side, and there we must leave the matter. However, I assure him that I shall raise the matter with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) drew general support for his anxiety about the effective working of the powers of the General Medical Council, and I shall report his views. Meanwhile, I am certain that he and many other hon. Members will be sympathetic to the efforts of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) with his private Member's Bill. My hon. Friend can judge its prospective fortunes when he examines the Order Paper.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) asked for a strategy for agriculture. I am certain that he is absolutely right in saying that the movement from a position of relative balance in food supplies and consumption to one which seems to be of endemic surplus in most major commodities calls for the most serious reconsideration of the strategy on which agricultural support is to proceed. I have also noted my hon. Friend's concern about the closure of Ministry of Defence establishments in his constituency. I will see that his anxieties have my reinforcement. I also notice that he hopes, in respect of the Shops Bill, for an open mind from the Government. Of course, my hon. Friend is asking for something that is perfectly obvious and it is not necessary for me to underline that.

The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) raised an issue that is familiar to the House, thanks to his persistent advocacy. I will of course do as he requested and forward the report of this debate to the Secretary of State for Defence.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) spoke about the problems of gipsies. Although we talk about human rights in other countries, I wonder how we would relish the United Nations telling us how gipsy encampments should be dealt with in this country. However, I will leave that matter to one side. That is not a jocular point but one of very real substance and I will of course do as requested by my hon. Friend.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) is much concerned about the closure of the company in his constituency. I take note of what he says and of his belief that the companies legislation has been ignored. That is very serious, if it should be so demonstrated, and I am certain that my hon. Friend will be putting his evidence prima facie to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I will report to my right hon. Friend the points that have been made.

My hon. Friends the Members for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) and for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) argued with great force their feelings about the NIREX proposals and I understand their procedural point about the relationship between the special development order and the Select Committee report. I will take a sympathetic view of that and I may be in touch with my hon. Friends in due course.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), with no constituency interest, I am sure, but out of concern for the wider national good, argued for more flexible drinking laws. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and I both gave answers on that topic within the past 10 days or so. Although my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton lives in hope, as indeed everyone does, of the Government changing heart, I do not think that I can change that quickly.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) hopes that the Government can avoid pilotage legislation. I have a vested interest in any arrangement which can do just as well what is proposed through legislation and which takes the place of legislation. I will therefore look with utmost interest and sympathy at whatever my hon. Friend has to say further on that matter.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) argued about the AOR fleet replacement vessel — with great fluency and with, I thought, the most commendable ideological elasticity. I have never heard a Labour Member argue the case for a free enterprise concern confronted by subsidised competition from a collectivist competitor. However, the hon. Gentleman speaks for the entire north-east, irrespective of party affiliation and I will pass on his remarks.

I would like to return to the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North about the growing use of crossbows. I have the utmost sympathy with my hon. Friend's point and I will gladly refer to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary the possibility of introducing a system of licensing. I have no doubt that that is a subject which could feature in private Members' legislation in the next Session of Parliament.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) argued with great persuasiveness, although I am not in any position to comment on the virtue of her argument. Everyone in the House, however, will be concerned about our national procurement policy, and the importance of national sources, not to be exclusive, but to have the dominant role in that situation. As requested, I will pass on the hon. Lady's comments to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. Indeed, I think that next time my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence might be at the Dispatch Box answering this debate rather than myself as he seemed to feature more prominently in the general requests than I did.

My hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) talked about the tercentenary celebrations that are planned, and I will ensure that his views are passed on to the organising committee. I was delighted that he gave a first-class historical survey. Hon. Members should realise that those were the very events on which we have based our traditions and allegiance. He also mercifully suggested a banquet, which added a certain lift to the whole subject.

I liked the reference by my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge to the bishops. Was it not wonderful that, in those days, seven bishops were prepared to stand apart from the modus, convention and commitment to the fashions of the day and, were prepared, on a point of principle, to become the noncomformists, or the non-jurors? I wanted to say that about bishops.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish again raised the serious subject of places in higher education. I shall, of course, draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

[Mr. John Biffen]

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) demonstrated a most formidable case on the strategic defence initiative. I could not even begin to answer a fraction of his points. I hope, therefore, that he will excuse me if I merely say that, whatever our views about defence policy, is it not important to consider the fact that the defence system may become so important and dominant that the policy serves the defence system but really the defence system should serve the policy? I welcome the hon. Gentleman's interest in this topic. I hope that he will remain the good, sound, radical, irritating Member of Parliament he has been these 20-odd years. Those attributes have given him a place of special affection, at least in my eyes, in the House.

I shall look at the points made by the hon. Member for Linlithgow about Jim Smith and shall get in touch with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. I understand the analogy the hon. Gentleman drew with the pit prop case in the 1960s and 1970s.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the right hon. Gentleman raise Jim Smith's case with the Treasury?.

Mr. Biffen: Yes, certainly.

I do not want to become involved in an internal dispute about Manchester, but the case to which my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr Silvester) drew attention—the so-called graffiti case—is not the property of Manchester; it belongs to a much wider national debate. I therefore see no reason why the House should not have the opportunity to take a view on those matters. I shall pass on my hon. Friend's remarks to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) referred to the treatment of Nepalese Christians. Of course, a country with a strong tradition of association with the Gurkhas would take a keen interest in Nepal as a friendly neighbouring country and would wish to exercise friendship and tolerance in its appreciation of that country's social customs. I shall refer my hon. Friend's points to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. I am sure that my hon. Friend would be the first to realise the strict limits to which one can push the question of the influence which can be successfully harnessed to the spirit of friendship. Beyond those limits, it becomes an irksome and ineffectual attempt to interfere in the social arrangements of other countries.

The important point of this evening's debate is the motion. Without it, we could not have this short break. We work longer hours than any other Parliament in western Europe, and I think that we earn and deserve the break.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House, at its rising on Thursday 27th March, do adjourn until Tuesday 8th April and, at its rising on Friday 2nd May, do adjourn until Tuesday 6th May; and the House shall not adjourn on Thursday 27th March until Mr. Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts which have been agreed upon by both Houses.

Local Government Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 2

PROHIBITION OF POLITICAL PUBLICITY

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 2, line 16, leave out ", or can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect,".

The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government (Mr. William Waldegrave): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this, it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 2 and 3.

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not have much enthusiasm or pleasure in moving the motion. The amendments remove the concept of publicity material and publicity campaigns which

"can reasonably be . . . likely to affect"

public support for a party.

10.15 pm

The Government's view on this has been made quite clear throughout the debates in the House, in Committee and in another place. We believe that the removal of these words seriously weakens clause 2.

As the House will recall, prior to these amendments the prohibition of party political publicity fell into two parts. Local authorities were to be prohibited from publishing material which appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party and from publishing material which on a reasonable view — the Clapham omnibus test, if you like—would be regarded as likely to affect such public support.

The second limb of the test supplemented the first. One of the most disquieting developments that we have seen in recent years is the effort and resources which some councils are intent on devoting to the production of campaigning and publicity material which, while it may not apparently be designed to promote a political party, would nevertheless be so taken by any reasonable person.

The second leg of the prohibition in clause 2(1) tackled this problem. It follows therefore that the amendments made to clauses 2 and 4 of the Bill in another place are not acceptable to the Government.

However, the Government believe it essential for the Bill to receive the Royal Assent before 1 April to ensure both the enactment of the date for a rate provision for the next financial year and, given the limited time available before the Easter recess, to ensure that there is no question of unintentionally making some of the Bill's provisions retrospective.

For these reasons, we do not propose to invite the House to disagree with the Lords amendments to clause 2. The position, as my hon. Friends will be quick to point out, is far from satisfactory. It is true that the Bill as amended is a much needed improvement on the present position where there is no express prohibition on party political publicity. For this reason, the Government have decided that further legislation should be introduced next session to restore the effects of the Lords amendments to clause 2. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced this recently.

Amendment No. 2 deals with a much smaller issue, the removal of the word "particular". This again we regret. It was a common-sensical definition which seemed to make sense, but I am not going to ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to reverse the Lords amendment. We will have to return to this in the autumn. I have to urge my hon. Friends, although I know that this is not palatable to them —and I can tell them it is not palatable to me either—to accept half a loaf in order to get something on the statute book, and in due course we will have to return to the matter.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I have a submission from the National Union of Journalists, Forth valley branch, saying that it is concerned about the proposed Local Government Bill which is currently progressing through Parliament. It says:

"We feel that the Bill could seriously affect information being given to the press by local authorities. We would therefore offer our support to any moves against the Bill which you may be considering."

That is signed by Tim Harper, secretary of the Forth valley journalists.

For the sake of time, I put it in question form. Do local papers have anything to fear in their relations with local authorities in the gaining of information? It may make it easier if the Minister were to interrupt.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am delighted to do so. I believe that I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that he seeks. No newspaper has anything to fear from this matter. I believe that the worries—I understand them because this is a sensitive area in which to be legislating—are ill-founded.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I rise with some regret because I was looking forward to seeing the Bill go forward unamended. I believed very much in the spirit of the Bill and that we were going to cane those Labour authorities which were wasting ratepayers' money throughout the country. I had hoped very much that the Bill would do that.

It depressed me when I read yesterday's *Leicester Mercury* dated 24 march, which said:

"Thank you. The Local Government Bill, which gags Local Councils freedom of speech is likely to become law. However, Leicester City Council and Leicester people have played an important part in securing major amendments. We would like to thank those in Leicester who joined the Council's campaign to defend local democracy — Voluntary groups, residents associations and all members of the public who wrote or phoned us to express their support.",

It had the audacity to say:

"Leicester City Council . . . trying to work for you."

Ratepayers living in Leicester have to pay for that propaganda promoting the Labour party. I object to that. I had hoped that the Bill would stop people from printing party political propaganda on the rates. I understand the position in which my hon. Friend the Minister finds himself. Because he has to get the Bill through by 1 April, because the House of Lords is not sitting much longer and because it is difficult to get their Lordships all into the right Lobby more than four times a year, we are faced with material which, if it is designed carefully, will be published on the rates to persuade people in Leicester to support the Labour party. The amendment is a severe letdown to my constituents.

[Mr. Peter Bruinvels]

On 19 June 1985 the Labour party in Leicester introduced a political unit whose purpose was basically to monitor the way in which Conservative Members of Parliament reacted in the city. It was also to allow £137,000 to be spent on stopping Leicester from being rate capped. But Leicester was rate capped, so our money was wasted. The political unit was to increase

"public awareness of the need for the City Council to regain powers such as control of education and social services lost to it in the 1974 local government reorganisation."

Why should we have to pay to have such propaganda shoved up our noses? I object to it. I object, too, to the equality unit which the city council established which at a cost of £20,000 per annum tells people why it is good to have the Labour party running the local authority. The council set up a racial awareness course costing £37,000 initially and £28,000 per annum. What has that to do with the city of Leicester? The council established creche facilities at £41,900, a trade union officer at £10,000 a year, an anti rate-capping unit at £150,000, a contract compliance unit to ensure that contracts had nothing to do with the South African Government and a public relations unit which was supposed to work for us but which works instead for people who do not pay rates. Those who fund the rates and who put money into the city do not have a voice, whereas those who do not pay have.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Has my hon. Friend made any calculation of either the number of additional houses which could have been built or the number of young people who could have been trained if all that money had not been wasted by the local authority in the way that he described but had been spent in socially helpful and useful ways?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman goes down that road he will be out of order. He must stick strictly to the amendments before the House.

Mr. Bruinvels: The essence of my hon. Friend's intervention is that the council was wasting ratepayers' money on promoting the Labour party rather than helping the people who live in the city and who have to pick up the tab at the end of the year. Many houses could have been repaired with those exorbitant, wasted funds, yet the council deliberately chose to keep 12,000 houses throughout the county unoccupied so that it could claim there was a housing crisis in the city of Leicester. That was a dereliction of duty. The city council was elected to give value for money. It was not a Conservative council, so I suppose it did not try to give value for money, because it was spending money that did not belong to it.

Only last week, for instance, the Trades Unions Congress women's conference came to Leicester. Instead of the local authority charging the TUC £1,250 for hosting the conference, it gave the facilities free because it was its Labour party friends from London who were coming to Leicester. If any other organisation, including the ex-service men of Leicester, had tried to hire the De Montfort Hall, it would have had to pay. Why is the city council using such propaganda? Why are the Government doing away with the appropriate clause in the Bill? If some people in Leicester have a different view from that expressed by the city council, why should it not be promoted?

The council is wasting money, with the latest edition of *Leicester Link*, promoting Labour party propaganda and spending about £3,000 on promoting what the Labour group on Leicester council feels about Nelson Mandela. Why should the ratepayers, the citizens of Leicester, have to pay £3,000 to be told what the city council reads and feels about the struggle——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is making a Second Reading speech on the principles of the Bill. I invite him to direct his attention to the narrow provisions of the amendment and to speak to that.

Mr. Bruinvels: The narrow part is that political propaganda on the rates is to be allowed, and I object to that. We are trying to get that clause reinserted in the Bill. I and a number of my hon. Friends feel let down by the fact that political propaganda is to be allowed to continue.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): The hon. Gentleman may have newspapers coloured red. I have here the *Ratepayer Reporter* for Westminster, and it is coloured blue. It is full of writings by Lady Porter and has pictures of the Secretary of State for the Environment. There are two sides to this argument.

Mr. Bruinvels: It does not matter which party puts out the propaganda, it should not be allowed, and I object to paying for it. Wherever it happens, the residents are right to call in the district auditor to look at the way in which propaganda is put out. That is why we need this clause and do not need to have the Lords amendment thrust upon us, because we cannot get a large number of their Lordships together in another place to sort out this amendment. That is a tragedy for citizens, who rightly feel abused.

When I listened to the Minister of State and the Secretary of State for the Environment, I believed that we could hope to save money for the citizens of Leicester and for the citizens in other local authorities. I thought that the Minister had made himself clear when the Bill was introduced that we were to stop this kind of propaganda on the rates. In Leicester this year the rates bill has gone up by 80 per cent. That is killing jobs and denying businesses the opportunity to expand. The Labour party says, "We are doing this to help you." Who is it helping? Business is at a trickle, a number of people have no chance of promotion and we are in a nasty situation. It is a rates blow, and I am worried about that.

Leicester city council spent £20,000 telling me and other residents that it was working for us. That seems quite incredible and out of line with what we want to see—proper control of our rates. It is propaganda. We pay the bill, but it appears from what my hon. Friend has said that we will have no say. I am bitterly disappointed. Propaganda is rife in Leicester. My constituency is talked about and I am warned on the back of the *Leicester Link* of February 1986 about what will happen if an international airport at Evington is allowed. There is also advertising in the national papers. That is a scare tactic by the Labour council, but we have to pick up the bill. Any expense of this sort is totally irresponsible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying from the amendment. If he does not stick closely to the words of the amendment and what it means, he will have to resume his seat.

Mr. Bruinvels: We on the Government side are trying to stop propaganda from being put on the rates.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must direct himself to the Lords amendment that has been tabled.

Mr. Bruinvels: It reads:

"or can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect,"

We are talking about the Bill and about propaganda. I want to address the matter of the £150,000 that is being spent campaigning against rate capping. In that campaign the Labour party says, "We are working for you." The Labour party spent that money after the council was rate capped, and that was a disastrous dereliction of duty by the city council. Having spent £150,000 to try to stop the council from being rate capped, even though the citizens of Leicester were crying out to be rate capped, it was not possible — despite the amendments that I want to see inserted—for the council to be rate capped.

10.30 pm

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): The amendment changes the test so that it will be possible for local authorities to indulge in political propaganda which, while not promoting a party, may have that effect on the electorate.

Mr. Bruinvels: Exactly, and that is why last Sunday in the city of Leicester there took place a ceremony at which the Welford road recreation ground was renamed Nelson Mandela park. Throughout the area the Labour party had on display stickers promoting the change, and we must pick up the bill, amounting to £13,650—more waste of the citizens' rates.

It is clear that all the campaigns — be they on behalf of gays, CND, the prevention of terrorism or —[*Interruption.*] against the police, will be allowed, and that is a tragedy for my constituents. Similarly, the city council is trying to establish a twinning arrangement with Nicaragua, claiming that the Labour party there has strong international links with the city council. Why should we citizens have to pay £7,000——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I warn the hon. Gentleman that I shall have to ask him to resume his seat unless he relates his remarks to the amendment.

Mr. Bruinvels: The amendment weakens the Bill, and that worries me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are not discussing the Bill. The hon. Gentleman had better resume his seat. Mr. Benyon.

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) is wrong in thinking that the amendment removes clause 2 in its entirety. It simply ensures that the provision corresponds more closely to the recommendations of the Widdicombe inquiry. It is essential in these matters to proceed slowly and with consensus, or we will get it wrong.

The Lords are simply asking us to try this out and see what happens, and we should take their advice. I believe, from my experience in local government, that clause 3, which the Lords have left untouched, is the important provision.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Would you please explain to me what is going on?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I warned the hon. Gentleman several times, after which I directed him to resume his seat.

Mr. Benyon: I urge hon. Members to agree with the Lords in this proposal.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): My hon. Friend referred to his experience in local government. Did he serve on an authority on which militant Left-wing councillors were spending ratepayers' money trying to unseat Conservative Members of Parliament?

Mr. Benyon: I live in the area of a very Left-wing Labour authority. Through my letter box comes the sort of material to which my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East referred. The amended clause will prevent that material from appearing in that way. But if I am wrong, there will be an opportunity to change the measure. To go against the recommendations of the Widdicombe inquiry would be counter-productive in the present situation. We must proceed slowly, and if what is proposed turns out to be wrong, we can then have another go at it, as the Minister explained.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): I support the objective of the Bill in preventing local authorities from abusing the system by indulging in political propaganda on the rates.

I should like the Minister to explain, when he replies to what I hope will be a brief debate, why he accepts the Lords amendment with reluctance. I represent, as hon. Members will know, a town that specialises in the holiday trade. The local authority has expressed great concern about the original wording of the clause. My hon. Friend will know that it was true historically that local authorities specialising in tourism have done much to support the infrastructure of tourism. They have built swimming pools, sea defences and other physical manifestations of the tourist trade. Local authorities have also supported tourism in their areas—I believe this is true throughout the United Kingdom — by publicity for the tourist attractions of their towns.

This aspect of the Bill has caused anxiety to the Blackpool council and, as my hon. Friend will know, much more widely among the local authority associations. They have taken the view that the original clause went too wide and was in danger of limiting their ability to publicise the tourist attractions of a town.

Perhaps my hon. Friend will explain on winding-up, why he believes that this concern, which is widely shared by the holiday towns, is misplaced. That is the inference of what he says. Does he think it necessary to restore the clause later in this Session? Can he give an assurance that, if it is done, local authorities specialising in tourism will not be handicapped in publicising their attractions?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): I doubt whether anyone would question my credentials concerning my experience and knowledge of Left-wing councils.

My hon. Friend is in a very difficult position in having in his Bill, which has come back to us from another place, words placed in by former permanent civil servants, who are, there, usually out of touch with reality. We have to be in touch with reality. Although my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon) said that he

[Sir Geoffrey Finsberg]

wished to proceed by consensus, I can think of nothing worse than consensus. It is usually the lowest common denominator.

I have listened carefully to what was said by the Minister. He gave one of the clearest undertakings I have heard at this stage of a parliamentary Session that we will, rather than may, have to return to this matter in the next Session with a further Bill. I understand this issue well. I have been under attack in my constituency for a long time, from this sort of political rubbish. Those hon. Members on both sides of the House who have served in local government know that neither major political party would have indulged in it six years ago, let alone 10 or 20 years ago. We are faced with it now.

We must rely on two things. First, we must rely on a clearly growing anxiety among responsible people in all three major political parties. Although it may be said that publication of various muck sheets may be of assistance to the Labour party, I doubt whether the Labour party wants to see this sort of publication, which is gradually displacing moderate councillors by militant councillors. I do not believe that the Labour party wants this, although it may be too scared to say so publicly.

We need to act in a realistic and practical fashion. One would have wished to see the Widdicombe report published in full much more swiftly. "Mark 1" of Widdicombe, in the majority report. It sets out the real problem, saying that it is not yet certain how it should recommend that publication be dealt with.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sorry to interrupt my hon. Friend, but why is it in order for him to talk about the weakening effect of the amendment and for my hon. Friend the Minister to say that he regrets that the amendment weakens the original intention of the Bill when it is not in order for my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) to make the same point?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for the Chair. The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) was really making a Second Reading speech and not applying himself to the exact terms of the amendment.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I was specifically talking about amendment No. 2, leaving out the word "particular". I could talk to all three amendments, but it is convenient to save time and talk to one. Obviously, I could speak for longer, but I shall resist the temptation.

It was the majority report of the Widdicombe committee that led to the Bill and the amendments before us. I ignore for this purpose the minority report which, frankly, was not even worth the paper that it was printed on. I am glad that no one has referred much to that.

I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister replies he will make it clear that one of the main reasons that he adduced for not asking us to reverse the amendments was, first, the retrospection issue, and secondly, the pledge that he gave that further legislation will cover the real anxieties —I do not need to stress that—that all of us have. What is proposed tonight will not be detrimental to democracy provided that we return to it in the next Session.

I am prepared to accept what my hon. Friend the Minister has said.

10.45 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. Has not one element been left out? Should not my hon. Friend have been saying to the House that unless we agree to the amendments tonight we shall not get the Bill by 1 April? Failure to do that means that my hon. Friend the Minister cannot keep his promise to us and do what we all want this evening — to stop all the nonsense of political propaganda. Should not we soon end our speeches tonight and allow the Bill to go through so that my hon. Friend the Minister can keep his pledge and do what we all want in the next Session?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I find it difficult to agree with my hon. Friend completely. Will it suffice if I say that I too wish to see the Bill on the statute book as rapidly as possible?

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I had the pleasure of serving on the Committee which considered the Bill and, along with a number of colleagues, I spent most of my time arguing that the Bill was far too weak. It was something of an unpleasant surprise to discover that for technical reasons we are placed in a position tonight where we have to accept these ridiculous amendments from the other place which will fillet the Bill and weaken it in a dramatic manner.

It seems to me that the nub of amendment No. 1, which limits the ban on political material to material which appears to be designed to affect support for a political party, thereby excluding the wider test of material which can be regarded as likely to affect public support for a political party, neuters the Bill.

I say to those colleagues who believe that we still have a Bill which is helpful in the period until we have another, that certainly on my reading of the Bill it would allow any local authority to continue supporting the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. It will allow local councils to provide financial support for political pressure groups provided the money has not been earmarked for specifically political purposes. It will allow indirect funding of left-wing newspapers like *Labour Weekly* and *New Socialist* through advertising.

I know that hon. Gentlemen are in favour of public funds being used to help the Labour party, but those of us who believe in democracy and a free society are totally opposed to that.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not want to mislead the House. He knows very well that he can make a better argument than the one he is putting forward now. He knows very well that it is on record on many occasions that the Labour party is not in favour of using ratepayers' money to support the Labour party or any other party. What is more, exactly that phrase was used in the Labour party's official evidence to the Widdicombe committee of inquiry.

Could the hon. Gentleman explain what he means by the suggestion that it is somehow the intention of local councils indirectly to support papers like *Labour Weekly* and *New Socialist*?. That is not the purpose of those councils.

Mr. Forsyth: It seems that the Labour party's policy on this matter is rather like its policy on council housing — it says one thing in public and does another in practice.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Answer the question.

Mr. Forsyth: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me, I will endeavour to answer the question. If hon. Gentlemen are opposed to the use of public money to support political campaigns, for political purposes, why do they not vote against these Lords amendments tonight? The effect of these amendments is to allow local authorities to do that. I know that the Labour party has a problem in controlling some of its more extreme councils, which are busily using the loopholes in the law to carry out practices which I am delighted to hear the Opposition Front Bench condemning here tonight.

Mr. Barron: The hon. Gentleman has been asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) to give a specific answer. He mentioned *Labour Weekly* and said that local councils supported it. Could he tell us exactly how?

Mr. Forsyth: If the hon. Gentleman wants me to answer the question of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) he should not interrupt me in the middle of doing so. The situation with regard to *Labour Weekly* is this. Certain councils, such as my own, Stirling, and many others advertise consistently in *Labour Weekly* posts for officers; they receive no replies and they have been consistently criticised by district auditors. Colleagues are mentioning other councils — Manchester, Walsall, Sheffield. No doubt the hon. Gentleman can collect the names afterwards. I fear that I may be straying from the purpose of the amendment if I continue to list the many Labour councils that are doing this.

If the hon. Gentleman is in any doubt about the danger in these amendments and if he believes that the Lords amendments which we are being asked to consider are not dangerous, I refer him to an advertisement which appeared in *Marxism Today* by an organisation called "Union Communications", saying that it can be of help to local authorities. Anyone inquiring gets a letter back from one of the directors which says:

"You ask about Union Communications. Basically we are a small team of professional journalists PR and design people who have come together to offer the trade unions and Labour local authorities a communications service that beats anything the Tories can lay hands to."

"We believe we are succeeding."

"We have not worked as yet with many CLPs, though we would be happy to do so, except in so far as when we work for a local authority we invariably get involved with the CLP and help their own PR work."

"We have shown Basildon Council, for instance, how to put 10 per cent. on the Labour vote. Inevitably the CLP was involved and we had to show them what to do."

The point about this and other activities in the Labour party is that it is possible to carry on propaganda activities that can influence and improve the Labour vote without producing material that can be shown to be deliberately designed for that purpose. The amendment will weaken the test that would have caught such activities, and thereby open the floodgates to what the hon. Member for Blackburn has condemned, but which is rife within his party. Although Opposition leaders may condemn such activities, they are incapable of controlling the party. The Bill is needed in its original form to help them, and save them from their extremists.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): So far, the hon. Gentleman has concentrated all his remarks on the activities of Labour boroughs. There has already been an intervention about today's release to many hon. Members living this side of the river—a publication from the Tory-controlled City of Westminster. Does he believe that a publication that on its front page says "Rates down, services up" and inside speaks about the savings from the abolition of the GLC, which are arguable in the light of recent figures, is designed as likely to affect political support for the Conservative-run City of Westminster council? He should not criticise one party without admitting that his party is equally guilty.

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but, as is always the case with his party, he wants to have it all ways. If the hon. Gentleman is concerned about material that he says could be regarded as likely to affect public support of a political party, why is the hon. Gentleman supporting the Lords amendment? It would have the affect of removing that provision from the Bill, so allowing material produced by any council, whether Tory or Labour, to be designed to affect that. I have not seen the publication, so I shall not make an instant judgment, but it is extraordinary for the hon. Member to be complaining about something that in Committee he consistently did everything in his power to prevent being included in the Bill.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I have had the chance to study the document to which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) referred, and I agree with the hon. Member. Is this not an illustration of the point that my hon. Friend is trying to get across? If the Labour party were allowed to get away with producing such material, the inevitable consequence would be that Conservative and alliance authorities would be forced to follow suit, and that is the dangerous thing about having such an amendment to the Bill.

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It was evident in Committee that we did not approach the matter from a partisan point of view, but from a desire to have the best practice in local government, so that political parties did not use public money to their own advantage.

I have a leaflet called "Working for Local People". The hon. Member for Blackburn seems keen to have examples, and I am keen to provide them for him. The leaflet is produced by Hackney borough council and is being widely distributed in the borough six weeks before the local elections. There is nothing in here that suggests that it is deliberately promoting the Labour party. However, its timing and intent are obvious. It is intended to influence the results of the local government elections.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman will no doubt have an opportunity to make his speech against the amendments. Let me make mine.

This type of propaganda material, which has been produced by the Labour party in Hackney in order to influence the results of the local authority elections, would not be caught by the Bill as amended by the House of Lords. When the Bill left this House, it would have been caught because it would have been caught by the fact that it was likely to affect the voting intentions of the electorate.

The key issue in judging whether material is party political is its effect on the people, not the motive or

[Mr. Forsyth]

intention of the publisher. The intention is quite irrelevant. I have to say to my hon. Friend the Minister that I very much regret that we are in a position tonight where we are being asked not to reject the amendments.

I understand that there is a timing problem, that the Bill as it stands is required to come into effect on 1 April and that it will not be possible to change that, because it is not within the rules of order for us to do that in the House. Why could we not have had a one clause Bill to amend the Bill itself and change the date on which it came into effect? How is it possible for there to be such rank incompetence in the Department of the Environment so that we can spend hours and hours arguing for this in Committee, use considerable effort making the case for it in our constituencies, and at the end be robbed of the impact of it? I do not blame my hon. Friends at the Department of the Environment, but I hope that some heads will be rolling in the Department because the advice that the Minister has been given is thoroughly inadequate.

One of the curiosities is that the noble Lord Elton in another place reminded the House of the procedural difficulties and of the fact that it would not be possible for there to be amendments other than those relating to Lords amendments which have been made in the House of Commons. Therefore, it is clear that Ministers were aware of the procedural difficulties, but on the technical point of amending the relevant clause that sets the date they were left badly advised. I think that that is most unfortunate.

I welcome the assurance of my hon. Friend the Minister that we will get a Bill in the next Session to put matters right. I hope that not only will the effects of the clauses be restored but that we will also see tougher action to deal with some of the abuses which would certainly have not been covered by the Bill in the first place. I also hope, as we are obviously going to have a local government jamboree Bill, that he will take the opportunity of dealing with unfair contract terms and with the problems of competitive tendering.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I should like to speak briefly and simply say that I wish that hon. Members would accept the Lords amendments. I do not think that the words which are being proposed to be left out make the slightest difference to the wording of the Bill. At the end of the day, there is a whole line of House of Lords' cases which clearly show that when the judges are asked to accept whether a matter is political they make up their minds on the particular facts on that particular occasion and these words will not make the slightest difference to that.

I do not think that anybody has fought harder than myself with regard to surcharge disqualification, political expenditure and so on but I urge the House to accept the amendments because they do not make any difference one way or another.

11 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): That is exactly the point that I was making. We have had a lot of debate about the effect of the amendments rather than the amendments themselves. Hon. Members seem to be getting hot under the collar, but I cannot see why we should be so arrogant as to believe that people are dunderheads and cannot see through anything that local authorities may be doing, or that the effect will not show up in the ballot box.

The problem is that many Government Members are seeking to put local government in a straitjacket. They forget that local government is the result of the democratic process, and they seek to condemn it. Without the amendment, the subsection reads:

"A local authority shall not publish any material which, in whole or in part, appears to be designed to affect . . . public support for a political party."

That is a straightforward subsection that will do exactly what people say that the Bill should do. But with the addition of the words:

"or can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect,"

we enter another arena. The matter would end up in court time and time again. Who will interpret "reasonably" "regarded as likely to affect"?

Who will make the decision? Will it be the Minister? If so, the decision will be politically one-sided. Will it be the courts? The Bill will do no more than provide a livelihood for the lawyers who will discuss the matter in court. In accepting the Lords amendment we will not alter the intention that lies behind the Bill, and I see no reason why it should not be accepted.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I welcome the notice that my hon. Friend gave, in addressing the Lords amendment, that he will bring another Bill back in the autumn. As he will have guessed, my hon. Friends and I are not in agreement with the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay). Anyone who believes that the deletion of the words will have no impact on the likely outcome is not putting his mind to the analogy with the law of libel, in which it is not the apparent design behind what a man says that counts but the effect. That is regularly judged in the courts, and that could well be the case if we accept the amendment.

Mr. Simon Hughes: In a libel case, a jury decides. In this case, the decision will not be made by a jury.

Mr. Walker: I am not a lawyer, but lawyers make a living out of finding out what the problems are, what the words mean and what Parliament intended——

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend need not be unduly intimidated by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). He has Lord Denning on his side.

Mr. Walker: I was not aware of that. I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention.

I have sometimes had the opportunity to sit in courts and listen to cases that were of interest to me. One thing that has become clear to me is that lawyers do very well by picking on words, defining their meaning and asserting what was intended by Parliament when Parliament inserted the words. The spirit of the law is considered as well as the letter of the law. The spirit of the law, when the Bill left this House, was, I believe, very clear. The Lords have substantially altered the spirit of the law, and we are very concerned. There will still be evidence of propaganda material being produced by authorities of one political colour or another, but that is not what matters. What matters is that this House had determined that public money should not be used in this way. The authorities that largely exploited this activity were Labour authorities. Equally, it is true that authorities of other political colours,

some of which were Conservative authorities, saw what was going on elsewhere and said, "This is unfair. That is not the way in which we expect the law to be enforced, or money to be spent, but if others are doing it and getting away with and making it work effectively to their advantage, we should be fools not to follow their example. If that is how the law stands, it is right to do so."

It is all very well for Members of the Conservative party to say that public funds should not be used for purposes of that kind when that does not happen in neighbouring councils, but Dundee district council, which is adjacent to my local authority, constantly used public funds before 1979 in ways that the Government of the day, either Conservative or Labour, did not intend.

My right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench have admitted that if these amendments are accepted the Bill will be substantially weakened. Therefore I welcome the fact that they say that they will come back to this matter. For that reason I shall not make the long speech that I had intended to make, although some of my hon. Friends still may say that I should do so. I welcome the assurance of my right hon. and hon. Friends that this will happen, and I know that it will happen.

Mr. Derek Spencer (Leicester, South): No amount of ministerial promises will save me one penny on my rates bill in the city of Leicester. We have arrived at a lamentable state of affairs. this should not have happened. In 1835 the Royal Commission on municipal corportations referred to the corporation of Lecester and said:

"During the election of 1826 the Corporation of Leicester expended £10,000 to secure the success of a political partisan."

From 1826 to 1986, as we are on the brink of the city council elections, the wheel has turned full circle. What progress have we made?

The Royal Commission of 1835 said:

"There prevails amongst the inhabitants of the incorporated towns a general dissatisfaction with their municipal institutions . . . a discontent under the burthens of local taxation, while revenues that ought to be applied to the public advantage are diverted from their legitimate use . . . and squandered."

That was in 1835. It is still going on now, and it will continue to go on. Please, let us do something effective about it.

Mr. George Park (Coventry, North-East): I understand the frustration on the Conservative Benches. Over the years they have become accustomed, with their huge majority, to pushing all sorts of crazy schemes through this House, so when there is a hiccup they become very frustrated. When they say that they are concerned about what they generally describe as "propaganda", what they may really be afraid of is that if responsible local authorities are not denied the opportunity to explain to their electors why the rates are at a certain level, the reasons advanced by those local authorities may register with the voters and to that extent may influence the outcome of elections.

Conservative Members of Parliament cannot have their cake and eat it. If they ask local authorities to explain why they are spending a certain amount of money, they should allow those authorities to explain the situation from their point of view. It seems that Conservative Members consider that anything that comes from a local authority, especially if it is a Labour one, must be classed a propaganda, but councils concerned, as all responsible people are, that there should not be any waste of money, whether it is in local or in national Government.

Conservative Members do not realise that in pursuing the original content of the Bill, despite what their Minister has said to them, they may well blunder into a quagmire of lawyers' expenses which will involve them in spending money in far greater quantities than the amounts about which they are complaining now.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): The House will be relieved to know that I do not intend to detain it for long. I have studied the Bill and I cannot see any references to radioactive waste, therefore, I shall be able to contain my remarks to a few minutes.

I recognise the difficulty which faces the Minister, and I appreciate the assurances he has given for the future. He still has work to do. The Minister will have heard the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) in which he suggested that the words contained in Lords amendment No. 1, which they wish to delete from the Bill, did not matter one way or the other.

In the Standing Committee, of which I was a member, the Minister went to great lengths to show that those words are important and significant. Committee colleagues and I tabled amendments because we did not think that the original Bill went far enough, but my hon. Friend the Minister reassured us. We agreed with the Bill as originally drafted before it was emasculated by the other place.

The Minister stressed that the words in the Lords amendment

"or can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect,"

were important. It is important for the House to have had an assurance from the Minister that we will have the opportunity in the next Session—presumably by means of another Bill — to have the words which may be deleted put back. Thus, the effect which the Minister wished to achieve with regard to local authority wastage and political propaganda would be achieved.

There is a problem for my own local authority with regard to the Bill as it will go onto the statute book. I am afraid I do have to refer to a constituency issue. The Humberside county council, a hung county council, is opposed to the possible special development order which may be presented by the Minister to dispose of nuclear waste in the area. Presently, the county council is distributing a newspaper to all households in the county of Humberside setting out its opposition to the proposal.

If the Bill were to go through without the Lords amendment, I would be able to say to my county council that it passes the test and that no Department of the Environment Minister can accuse it of wasting ratepayers money for political purposes designed to affect a political party. I am worried that if the Lords amendment is agreed to and the Bill then receives Royal Assent the county council officials——

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): The hon. Member says that the newspaper would not be regarded as in any way affecting a political party. That might be true in Humberside, but it would not be true in parliamentary elections where there were parties for and against a matter in and outside the Chamber. The newspaper would be just as likely to affect parliamentary as well as local elections, so would then fall foul of the Bill.

11.15 pm

Mr. Brown: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, but I am dealing with the Bill as it will affect

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the county of Humberside in the coming weeks and months. At this moment county council advisers are wondering where they will stand regarding the campaign, which all three parties want to wage and which has the support of ratepayers who wish their rates to be used for it, as a result of the Bill reaching the statute book in the form envisaged by the other place. I regret that we are invited to agree to the deletion of those words. I had hoped that they could be used as a complete defence of the Labour-controlled council. I have made it clear that in my view the council has clearly passed the test of the Bill as it was originally drafted. I am absolutely convinced that it will pass the test even if we agree to the Lords' amendment, but its advisers are in a quandary about their advice in the light of the Lords' amendment. I deeply regret that the Government have found it necessary, for reasons that I wholly understand, to give way to the other place.

We should deliberate for a few moments on the wider constitutional issues which arise from this little incident. We are accountable to our electors, and have heard the cry from all political parties in the House down the decades, certainly throughout this century, that the other place must give way ultimately to the democratic wishes of this House. It appears that we are in grave danger — Opposition Members, in particularly, will agree — of getting ourselves into a constitutional mess, if increasingly we accept amendments from the other place which fall foul of the democratic process.

I do not need to detain the House for much longer. I regret that we have found ourselves in this position. I hope that the Government have learnt some lessons from this sorry essay, and that we can look forward to a strong Bill next year which will receive the full support of the majority of hon. Members in this House and will be well regarded in the other place.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I never thought to hear a Tory complain that the Lords were passing amendments. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) should refresh himself about the availability of measures introduced by Liberal Governments, if he feels that amendments should be overturned or Parliament dealt with.

More pertinent to the amendment, I do not follow the hon. Gentleman's key point about Humberside county council, that there is a genuine and widely felt fear that the provisions may affect local authorities in which members from all political parties and no political party wish to combine to campaign on a particular issue. It is the hon. Gentleman's contention that the campaign about nuclear waste which the council is instituting will be made more difficult to sustain under the Bill with the Lords amendment than without it. I cannot understand the force of his argument. It seems manifest from the way in which the decision was reached that it could not be claimed that the material that the council was producing was designed to affect public support for a political party. However, it could reasonably be regarded by someone else as designed to do so, and it is on that distinction that the Lords' amendment turns. The exclusion by the Lords of those words appears to make it easier for Humberside to sustain its case as it in no way sets out to support a particular political party and was fighting a campaign which all parties on the council agreed upon. Any reasonable man, like my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft), with characteristic reasonableness might conclude that it would affect support for a political party. However, if that is a test, I do not think that the council in the constituency of the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes would suffer that difficulty and he should therefore be supporting the Lords amendment.

I was amazed that Conservative Members should seek to claim as some did, that the indulgence of Conservative-controlled councils in measures which would be caught by this clause even in its amended form was some recent, sudden response to the things that we have seen Labour-controlled councils do. I was grateful to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) who revealed how far back that kind of corruption in local government goes.

I do not believe that hon. Members can reasonably claim that the Westminster city council, provoked by the imminent fear of overturn, either by the alliance or the Labour party at the next municipal elections, has produced and sent out a news sheet which many hon. Members received this morning, a copy of which I have brought into the Chamber, called the "Ratepayer Reporter". This is full of pictures not of the Lord Mayor, an independent figure, but of the political leader of the council, Lady Porter, pictured in several places with the Secretary of State cutting the red tape. The paper is full of claims that the abolition of the GLC will result in cost savings for the ratepayers in the city of Westminster.

Mr. Dickens *rose*——

Mr. Beith: I will not give way. That point of view is at least argued in the House, and the "Ratepayer Reporter" continues to claim such delights for the people of Westminster as the provision of a new jaccuzzi and steam bath in the Seymour leisure centre.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, because I pay high rates in Westminster and I must say that the "Ratepayer Reporter" does not compare in any way with papers put out by Labour-controlled authorities in the north-east. It is much more costly to produce, contains more political pictures and pictures of Ministers, but above all, it reports on its back page information about pets, firework displays and councillors running around in scanty clothes for charitable purposes——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must relate his remarks to the amendment. We must get back to the amendment.

Mr. Beith: The point that I want to put to the Minister is that I am satisfied, although I do not know whether he is, that this news sheet put out by the city of Westminster would fail the test with the Lords amendment included in the Bill. That is the crucial point for hon. Members to realise.

Mr. Dickens *rose*——

Mr. Beith: That news sheet is designed to affect public support for a political party. It does not depend for its offence against the provisions of the Bill on someone reasonably regarding it as likely to affect support for a political party. It is clearly intended to affect support for a political party. That is not a new phenomenon in the city of Westminster, as it has been producing material like this——

Mr. Dickens: Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. Beith: No. I am trying to address an important point to the Minister. I would like the Minister to say whether he feels that the wording of the Lords amendment bringing in the rest whether a reasonable man would regard it as likely to affect support is necessary to catch the "Ratepayer Reporter" within the provisions of the Bill. I am satisfied that, with the Lords amendment, the leaflet will be a caught but it must surely bring home to the Minister the complications that he has created by the wording of the clause. He must be satisfied that the words that the Lords want to remove are not necessary in order to treat such documents as condemned by the Bill.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I have lived in Westminister for 20 years and have never before seen a paper such as the one to which the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) referred. It is the first and, I suspect, the last of its kind. The hon. Gentleman should have taken the time to read *The Londoner*, which was published by the GLC at £750,000 a shot——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must relate his remarks to the amendment.

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed should have read *The Londoner*, which is a permitted publication and which will continue to be one if the Lords amendments are carried, and he would then have shared, my concern about the abuse of public money by the GLC.

The members of the Labour and Liberal parties are laughing behind their hands. They are holding their hands to their breasts like nuns and saying that they are whiter then white, but, at the same time, they are arguing that the Lords amendments will not change, clause 2 in the way we fear. If Labour and Liberal Members do not share that fear, why do they not vote against the Lords amendments? The argument has been put time and time again, but they still attempt to split hairs. Neither party has proved anything. They way in which Liberal and Labour Members laugh behind their hands leads me to challenge their sincerity. I do not believe that they want to do anything to stop party political propaganda on the rates. They believe that their parties have profited from it, and they want that to continue. That is why they want these amendments to be accepted.

I was glad to hear my hon. Friend the Minister say that legislation will be introduced on this subject. I ask him to take a fresh look to ensure that the amendments are dealt with properly. Will he say that again and underline it in red? My hon. Friends needs to say that repeatedly.

I do not doubt that the Lords amendments weaken clause 2 seriously. They therefore damage the Bill and weaken its basic intention — to stop party political propaganda on the rates. It is necessary to stop that propaganda, because it is an abuse of democracy of public money and of our way of life. There is no doubt that, unless that material is stopped, the position will worsen and the abuse of public money will increase. One need only look at the party political propaganda generated at public expense in recent years to see the steep increase in the amount churned out.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My hon. Friend said that in 20 years he had seen only one copy of that newspaper. I have lived in Lambeth for one year and I receive party political literature every day.

Mr. Greenway: I made my comment as a citizen of Westminster, referring to Westminster city council. My hon. Friend is right—that is the rule in neighbouring authorities. It happens all the time. That is why I am justified in saying that, in trying to defend that propaganda, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), for whom I have a high regard, is laughing behind his hands, metaphorically speaking.

The GLC spent something like £100 million of ratepayers' money by one device or another attempting to save itself from abolition. Would the clause as it stands with Lords amendments have prevented that from happening as the Bill was then drafted? I do not believe that it would.

11.30 pm

I believe that it is important to dismiss the Lords amendments. In the last few weeks £5,000 of public money has been donated to Ealing CND. I believe that the Lords amendments will enable that sort of abuse to continue.

The money was given to Ealing CND to promote a campaign—totally spurious, of course—to turn Ealing into a nuclear-free zone, a fatuous idea. If that sort of donation had been repeated across the London boroughs, it would have cost London ratepayers about £160 million or £170 million, and that would be just to put just one side of the question. If money had been spent on putting both sides of the question, it would have cost London ratepayers about £500,000. My argument is that it was wrong for the GLC to give Ealing CND £5,000, and to spend £81,000 on CND activities across London, as it has in the last 12 months, and it would be equally wrong to give that sort of money to those who promote the opposing argument.

Until legislation effectively prevents that kind of gross abuse of public money, the House cannot be satisfied that it has done its democratic duty by the nation. I look to the Minister to reassure me that he meant what he said, and that a Bill will be introduced early to overcome the Lords amendments. I ask the Minister to say why this cannot be done in a one-clause Bill immediately after Easter.

Mr. Dickens: Speaking as I do from the safety of the GLC nuclear-free zone, I wish to make a few remarks before allowing other hon. Members to finish the debate.

Having listened to all the contributions, particularly those of hon. Members who have crowded into the Chamber at this late hour to take part in the debate, I think that hon. Members seem to have grasped the idea that ratepayers do not want money to be used for political propaganda. It does not matter if the local council is Conservative, Labour, alliance or controlled by other odds and sundries. The general ratepayers do not want their rates used for political propaganda, full stop.

The Bill has in it a test that has been made a little tougher by the Lords amendments. It does not satisfy us by a long chalk. If the test is too firm, a local authority may wriggle to one side of the black or white. If the test is less rigid, as we seek, we would from this moment onwards scotch spending on political propaganda.

The House of Lords has amended the Bill. We do not have legislation at the moment. If we do not pass the Bill as amended by the Lords, we shall not get a Bill on the statute book, which we all seem to want, by 1 April. The Minister has said that, in the next session of Parliament, he will bring forward a measure to restore the provision which most hon. Members want. As we have been given

[Mr. Dickens]

that assurance, surely we shall represent the ratepayers better by voting fo the Government's Bill, even if we are cross about the way in which it has come back to the House. We can hold the Minister to his pledge to amend the Bill. That is what the ratepayers want and that is why I shall support the Government tonight.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: I shall be incredibly brief; I do not want to make a speech but merely to ask a question about a matter which affects my constituency and Derbyshire as a whole. I raised it on Second reading when my hon. Friend said that he hoped that the Bill would prevent the problem. Derbyshire county counci has been forcing all schools in my constituency to return their stationery to the county council to have it overprinted with CND slogans saying:

"Derbyshire supports nuclear free-zones."

Almost all the teachers and governors I have met, whether Labour, Conservative, SDP or Liberal, have objected to the misuse of education for party political propaganda. I was assured by the Minister and by two Secretaries of State that one of the purposes of the Bill was to stop such a practice. Can my hon. Friend tell me whether we have stopped that practice? If not, why not?

Mr. Robert B. Jones: It will not have escaped my hon. Friend's notice that his hon. Friends are very concerned and angry about two issues—the weakening of the Bill and the way in which the decision of the House has been pre-empted by incompetence by one or more of the Department's officials.

The first depends on the difference between the two wordings, whether something is "designed to affect" or whether it

"can reasonably be regarded as likey to affect."

In the first case, design is much more difficult to prove. For example, if a peice of literature was put out, financed by a local authority, which said, "Vote Labour" or "Vote Conservative", clearly that would be designed to affect, and rightly would be caught by the law, as indeed it would be by other legislation already in existence.

The law would also cover a case in which it was possible to prove that there was a conspiracy by the leaders of an authority, whichever political party was involved, to influence an election by putting out over a period literature which was likely to lead to a greater number of votes for that party. Design would be much more difficult to prove. Of course, it could be proved if available to the court was literature such as the extract from the Marxist group presented earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth).

We have spent much time talking about the *Westminster Reporter*. That would not be caught by the legislation, because it could not be proved to be designed to affect public support. However, it could be regarded as reasonably likely to affect support, and that was the wording that the Lords tossed out. Over many years we have seen a growth of political propaganda on the rates. That is why the Widdicombe committee was set up. such propaganda started in recent times when authorities like Walsall produced a newspaper that went rond the borough and carried various political points.

The practice has escalated and needs to be dealt with, but I am not convinced that the Bill, given the way that the Lords have amended it, will catch anything unless it is absolutely blatant. I am sure that that is why my right hon. Friend and his colleagues on the Front Bench disagreed both in the other place and in the Committee with a wording that would have led to the Bill being along the lines of the Lords amendment.

What can we do about this matter? I agree with my hon. Friend the Minister. Because of the timing, he has a pistol at his head, because he needs to get the Bill through to ensure that no retrospective effect arises from the 1 April date contained in another part of the Bill. Although my noble Friend was quite clear about the possible trap when he spoke in the debate in another place, no one thought to do anything about it. That is why we are in this situation. When my hon. Friend replies to the debate, I expect him to say something about action that has been taken against those whose imcompetence has led us to this position.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The arguments advanced by some hon. Members on the Government side for not opposing the Government are twofold. First, it is said that the Minister has a technical obstacle and the Bill must be given a fair wind in order to meet a 1 April deadline. As the first speaker quite rightly said, that is irrelevant to all parts of the Bill except the rate setting part which is not governed by the amendments at all.

The Minister conceded when the Bill was before the House last time that clause 1 is, first, not binding on local authorities and, secondly, is unlikely to be the material event affecting local authorities this year. Most local authorities have already set their rates and those who have not now have the experience of the court decisions that followed the decisions of the district auditor in Lambeth and Liverpool.

I rebut the argument that the Government need to give in for technical reasons of a timetable and will not accept, simply because they do not have time to accept, the challenge issued by the Lords. If the Government do not like what the Lords want, they should say so and not pretend they are being strong while being weak. The Government say that they intend to put in another Bill to be introduced in the coming year the things that the Lords have taken out of this Bill. That is a severe breach of what the Government said they intended to do when they set up the Widdicombe committee. That committee was set up to report. If the Government had followed the interim report, they would not have found themselves in nearly as many difficulties as they have been in since.

I hope that what the Minister of State said at the beginning of the debate does not confirm the suspicions that many of us have — that the good work of the Widdicombe committee is already subject to the pre-judgment of the Department of the Environment, and that the Government do not intend to pay any heed to the conclusions of the Widdicombe committee, but will do what they intend to do with their minority support in the country and their somewhat distorted minority support in the House.

If the Government believe it wise to put on the statute book legislation like that which was originally in the Bill in this or in the next Session of Parliament, I hope they will think again. I should like to say something about part II and the clause and these amendments.

11.45 pm

Amendments Nos. 1 and 3 which stand in the names of my hon. Friends and I were all-party amendments in the Lords. There is, clearly, a difference between publicity

and publicity material which, on the one hand, appears to be designed to affect political support and which on its face manifests a certain intention and, on the other, a test which is far more subjective and which the Lords amendment seeks to remove.

While it may hve been bad enough to have gone far beyond Widdicombe, as the Government have, one hopes that the arguments will have persuaded them to agree that the objective test is preferable. The Widdicombe committee made the position clear when it said:

"We wish to avoid new controls that will be imprecise or raise major definitional problems . . . the content of the material is the best test."

The content, not the intention, the committee said.

The House should accept this series of Lords amendments—and should do so with grace—not only because they have logic in that they represent more closely the intentions of the Widdicombe committee. The Government should back down from their position of seeking to have it both ways, on the one hand pretending to fly in the face of logic and reason while, on the other, trying to gain support for a view that will temporarily let them off the hook tonight. If the Government do not change their view on this matter, they will have greater opposition next year, when politically they will be more embarrassed than Westminster city council has embarrassed them tonight.

Mr. Straw: The Conservative party has a substantial built-in majority in the other place—*[Interruption.]*—on paper. We are discussing these amendments tonight because the Conservative party in that House was unable to sustain its majority when the Bill in its original form was debated there.

When the Labour party proposed these amendments, support for them came from Independents, Liberals, SDP peers and from a small number of Conservatives, including Lady Faithfull. The amendments were passed in the other place mainly because Conservative peers decided to stay away because they could not stomach some of the draconian contents of the Bill.

Conservative Members in this House must remember those facts when they judge the Bill as it is proposed to be amended and when they decide whether it would be appropriate to have in the next Session of Parliament legislation designed to overturn a measure which will have gone through the due process of enactment in this Session.

I agree with the hon. Members for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) and for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) that the test which would be removed from the Bill and which would be replaced by the test

"or can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect"

would to some extent go further than the original test. If that were not the case, we should have nothing about which to argue.

It would go further than Widdicombe proposed, and because of that the other place decided to remove the second test. But, as the hon. Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon) and the right hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) pointed out, even with the removal of that second test, the Bill will still be a powerful weapon against any local authority which, in the view of a ratepayer, sought to spend ratepayers' money on party political progaganda.

The Bill, as amended, will say that a local authority

"shall not publish any material which, in whole or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party."

That is an objective test. It cannot be evaded by Committee reports or by legal jiggery-pokery. The courts will apply common sense in deciding whether material appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Does the hon. Gentleman believe that the legislation as it stands would catch the *Westminster Reporter?*

Mr. Straw: Yes I do. I believe that the amended measure would catch the *Westminster Reporter*. Nobody reading it through—I know that the hon. Gentleman has not had a chance to read it through, as we have on these Benches—certainly if he were a judge, could doubt that such material appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party. There is no other purpose in publishing material of that kind.

To reassure Government Members who worry that the Bill will end up too weak, the Opposition as well as local authority associations believe that the measure contains substantial powers against local authorities. Conservative, Liberal and Labour councils are represented on those associations. The right hon. Member for Blackpool, South, whose local authority is Conservative, spoke earlier of its concern and that of many other authorities about the legislation. There is no doubt about that.

The Bill, even as amended, will still restrict local government in many respects, far more than Government are restricted in their publicity. The test of intent, taken together with the ruling of the Divisional Court in the Lambeth and Liverpool cases, which gives great power in practice to council officers to give advice, will mean that many activities and statements of local authorities which were previously acceptable will be wholly excluded.

Some hon. Members may have read in newspapers reports of Glasgow city council being advised to exclude any reference to Government policy in its publications because that was thought to be outside the Bill.

The last thing that I shall say to the Minister—I hope that he will be given leave to reply to the debate—is that we understand, and have been given good evidence tonight if we did not understand before, the pressure on Ministers from the bovver boys on the Conservative Back Benches and from the boot boys in the Cabinet, such as the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

I hope that Ministers will not heed the siren voices from their Back Benchers and from within the Cabinet, but that they will give the legislation a chance to work. We did not write this measure, but we hope that Ministers will wait to see which side of the House is right before they return to the House with hasty legislation to overturn decisions that were made six months previously.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Earlier this evening at about 10.30 pm, you asked me to resume my seat. I seek your guidance and information about the reason why I was asked to resume my seat, especially as I was referring to problems in my own constituency in Leicester. We have heard the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) talking about Westminster city council and the publication of propaganda in his area. I do feel rather deprived, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I was trying to represent my constituents and talk about the expenditure of £370,000.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I explained to the hon. Gentleman that he was making no reference to the amendments before the House.

Mr. Bruinvels: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman wants to challenge the Chair, there are ways of doing it, but not now.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I respect your power in these matters, but if you check *Hansard* tomorrow you will find that my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) was——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr. William Waldegrave.

Mr. Waldegrave: With the leave of the House, I should like to reply to a number of points that have been made. I am not sure whether I can do justice to some of them in the few minutes that I have.

There will be a general consensus that the least satisfactory part of tonight's debate has been the somewhat unctuous performance by some Opposition Members—the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) took the biscuit with the Westminister council publication. I have not seen that. How childish that they have managed to find one Conservative council publication which may or may not be excluded by the Bill against the mass of material from Labour councils. Is the Liberal party saying—it is just possible—that there is only one party in Britain which never puts a foot wrong. I can assure the House from my experience in Bristol that that is not so. That is a dangerous game to play.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) asked about tourism. The local authorities have the power, going right back to before 1948, to publicise tourism. There is a specific provision in section 144 of the Local Government Act 1972, so I can set his mind at rest on that.

My hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) asked about sloganeering. I shall write to him, but it is worthwhile to draw his attention, and perhaps that of his ratepayers, to the judgment of Mr. Justice Glidewell on the fact that local authorities have the power to give information but not to sloganeer. That was what limited the power of the GLC last year.

The basic point at which we must look tonight was made clearly and powerfully by my hon. Friends the Members for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon), for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens). We have half a loaf here; something to get on the statute book. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) misunderstands the timing point. It is not mainly to do with the date for a rate provision, but rather that, if we go beyond 1 April the publicity provisions will be retrospective, and severely so.

My hon. Friends the Members for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) and for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) made powerful and well-argued speeches. They said that it would have been much better not to be in this position. I shall not shelter behind the fact that officials' heads will roll. It is the responsibility of Ministers to see that we get legislation right and we did not do so. We were then faced with considering whether the matter could be corrected.

At first we thought that there was a precedent of a one-clause Bill—the Pirates (Head Money) Repeal Bill of 1850—but unfortunately, despite its promising title, it did not provide us with a precedent. Therefore, there was a real difficulty.

My hon. Friends the Members for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) and for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), before he was unfortunately cut short, asked whether we are now clearly committed to returning to the matter in the autumn to restrengthen the Bill. It will disappoint Labour Members, but I can tell my hon. Friends that we are so committed. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made a clear statement to that effect the other day.

Mr. Benyon: This is an absolutely vital point as far as the local authority associations are concerned. Is my hon. Friend saying that he will do this regardless, will not actually see what happens, how the Bill works out, before taking that decision?

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend's commitment to strengthen the clauses weakened by the Lords is clear, but obviously, when we come to the drafting, we must take into account what has happened.

I will just draw attention once more to a powerful point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West, because it is the heart of this whole matter. This really relates to the rather childish points being made from a sedentary position by hon. Gentlemen. It may well be that there are Conservative authorities tempted to go outside the conventions, and if there are I can well understand why, under pressure from Liberal and Labour authorities, they are doing so. That is the evil that we want to stop. We want to prevent our people from having to behave as badly as their people. That is the basic purpose of this Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 2 and 3 agreed to.

Clause 3

OTHER RESTRICTIONS OF EXISTING POWERS

Lords amendment: No. 4, in page 2, line 34, leave out from beginning to end of line 5 on page 3 and insert—

"*(a)* in subsection (1) (power to make information available) after "other authorities" insert "mentioned in subsection (1B) below" and for "as to local government matters affecting the area" substitute "relating to the functions of the authority";

(b) after that subsection insert—

"(1A) A local authority may arrange for the publication within their area of information as to the services available in the area provided by them or by other authorities mentioned in subsection (1B) below.";

(c) in subsection *(2)(a)* (power to publish certain information) for "on matters relating to local government" substitute "relating to the functions of the authority".

(1A) After the subsection (1A) inserted by subsection (1) above, in section 142 of the 1972 Act insert—

"(1B) The other authorities referred to above are any other local authority, the Inner London Education Authority, a joint authority established by Part IV of the Local Government Act 1985 and any authority, board or committee which discharges functions which would otherwise fall to be discharged by two or more local or other such authorities."; and in section 88 of the 1973 Act insert—

"(1B) The other authorities referred to above are any other local authority and any authority, board or committee which discharges functions which would otherwise fall to be discharged by two or more local authorities,"."

Read a Second time.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, (f), in line 10, at end insert 'functions exercised'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may take also the following:

Sub-amendments to Lords amendment No. 4: (g) in line 11, after 'area', insert 'exercised or'.

(i) in line 12, at end insert

'or by the other bodies mentioned in subsection (1C)'.

(j) in line 12, at end insert

'or by the other bodies mentioned in subsection (1D) below where the material relates to a local government matter affecting the area'.

(o) in line 24, after 'authorities', insert 'and any police authority'.

(q) in line 24, at end insert—

'"(1C) The other bodies referred to are statutory undertakers as defined by section 290(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, health authorities established by the Health Services Act 1980, The Post Office and British Telecom";'.

(s) in line 24, at end insert—

'"(1D) The other bodies referred to are government departments, other public bodies and voluntary organisations".'.

(u) in line 29, at end insert—

'"(1C) The other bodies referred to are statutory undertakers as defined by section 275 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972, health authorities established by the Health Services Act 1980, The Post Office and British Telecom".'.

(w) in line 29, at end insert—

'"(1D) The other bodies referred to are government departments, other public bodies and voluntary organisations".'.

Lords amendment No. 5.

Lords amendment No. 6, in page 3, line 11, after "only" insert—

"*(a)* for the purpose of promoting the economic development of the authority's area, where the publicity is incidental to other activities undertaken or to be undertaken by the authority for that purpose, or

(b) "

Sub-amendment *(a)* thereto, in line 3, leave out from 'area,' to 'or' in line 5.

Lords amendment No. 7, in page 3, line 14, at end insert

"but the following provisions of this section apply to expenditure incurred by a local authority under section 142 below on information as to the services provided by them under this section, or otherwise relating to their functions under this section, as they apply to expenditure incurred under this section."

Sub-amendment *(a)* thereto, in page 3, line 14, at end insert

"and it is hereby declared that this section is a function of the authority for the purposes of section 142 below".

Lords amendments Nos. 8 and 9.

12 midnight

Mr. Boyes: I want to deal very briefly with three aspects of this group of amendments.

First, the Government are unnecessarily introducing a distinction between functions and services, which sows even greater confusion in a Bill already riddled with anomalies and has been described a number of times as a lawyers' paradise. In Committee, in far too many instances, Ministers replied to questions that the point would have to be decided in court.

Secondly, I shall deal with the problems that face voluntary and charitable organisations, which play a vital role in our society, particularly in the present difficult economic conditions, which increase the number of social problems due to unemployment, poverty and deprivation. Our amendment aims to broaden section 142 and enable local authorities to make greater use of that section and depend less on section 137.

Thirdly, I shall examine and demonstrate the difficult and complicated situation in which many metropolitan local authorities will find themselves on section 137 cash, which is used mainly in those areas for job creation and job protection because they are areas of very high unemployment, because essential publicity will have to be paid for with the cash that could be used for creating additional jobs.

Finally, I shall show, as Hardy would say to Laurel, that the Government have got themselves into another fine mess by trying to limit the use of section 137.

First of all, with regard to amendments *(f)* and *(g)*, the Government introduced the Lords amendment as a concession to costlier publicity. They realised that it was important for local authorities such as parish councils and town councils. I had the pleasure of being a member of one for more than 10 years and am well aware of the vital and valuable work they do in our communities. One of the important functions that they often carry out is the production, for example, of a brochure describing the services that are available, often provided by other tiers of government. But, as there have been more and more cuts on local authorities in other tiers, parish councils have frequently found themselves in the front line of campaigns against the closure of schools and hospitals and the cancelling of other proposed developments.

The Bill as drafted limits the general publicity powers in section 142 to the functions of the authority issuing the publicity. The new power contained in the Lords amendment allows publicity of the services available in the area covered by the local authority and other local government bodies. It is not clear why the Government have introduced the distinction between functions and services, and our amendment would allow publicity on both.

"Functions" are usually taken to mean both the duties and powers of local authorities, but they also include a range of discretionary powers that local authorities may or may not use. On the other hand, services would appear to be activities undertaken by a local authority, whether under mandatory duties or discretionary powers. The point of the distinction might be to exclude some publicity by one local authority about the exercise—or more likely non-exercise—of discretionary functions by other local Government bodies. For example, it would prevent a metropolitan district council from issuing publicity about the non-use by a passenger transport joint board of its discretionary powers to set concessionary fares. The amendment takes the sensible course of adding a reference to functions, and the exercise of them. Unless the Government are deliberately and actively trying to cause confusion, we cannot see why they should not accept the amendment.

Voluntary organisations will also face problems. Our amendment would broaden section 142 so that local authorities would be much less dependent upon the use of section 137 for the purpose of allowing voluntary organisations to publicise their functions. A number of hon. Members on both sides of the House are active in voluntary organisations of many different kinds and will be aware of the necessity for, and will support, the amendment.

[Mr. Boyes]

It seems peculiar that money can be used only where publicity is incidental. We cannot understand why it is that if a voluntary organisation asks for £1,000 for publicity purpose—for example the printing of a newsletter—it is not allowed to have that £1,000, but it can apply for a grant of £10,000 and use £1,000 of it for that purpose, because the printing of the newsletter is incidental to the purpose. I would be grateful if the Minister would say something about that unnecessary distinction.

Widdicombe recognised that if local authorities were to be prohibited from using section 137 for their publicity, this prohibition would have to exclude voluntary organisations, or a number of important projects such as welfare rights campaigns would also be prohibited. Therefore, he proposed, in paragraph 244(d):

"the exclusion of publicity from section 137 . . . should be so framed as not to prevent bodies funded under that section from issuing publicity to promote their own aims and objectives provided they are not acting as proxies for local authorities in unauthorised publicity".

Unfortunately, as in many other instances in this Bill, the Government do not follow Widdicombe's wording.

In another place an amendment by Lord Hayter said that local authorities could incur expenditure to enable a public body or voluntary organisation to promote its own aims and objectives, providing such publicity is not otherwise prohibited. However, the Government argued on 13 March 1986 in the other place that voluntary organisations had sections 142(1), 142(2)(a) and 137(3) available for financing them except for—and a most peculiar and disparaging word was used by the Minister—a whole range of sometimes "curious" single-issue campaign groups. I have carefully read the speech of the Minister in the other place and not once does he define in any way what he means by a "curious" group? We would argue that the so-called "curious" group, which could include such things as a welfare rights take-up campaign, could not get sections 142(1), 142(2)(a) or 137(3) to finance it and if it were requesting a grant to cover costs of publicity it could not get section 137(1) cash either. We are of the opinion that the widening of section 142 would mean that local authorities could fund a far wider range of voluntary organisation publicity and there would be no danger of it becoming a loophole for political publicity because the prohibition in clause 2 would still apply. All the amendment does is make it lawful for a local authority to use its section 142 powers to fund a wider range of campaigns including such things as hospital closures and welfare rights take-up.

I am concerned about the limiting of expenditure to the 2p. Our amendment is simple in its declaration that section 137 is a function for the purposes of section 142 but it improves the financial position by not making such expenditure count against the 2p limit. My area, Tyne and Wear, has the highest rate of unemployment in Britain. On April 1 Tyne and Wear metropolitan council will be abolished. That means that we lose the product of a 2p rate that could be spent to enable us to create new jobs and protect existing jobs.

Mr. Holt *rose*——

Mr. Boyes: I have asked the Minister a number of times why he will not double the amount of money that the other authorities in the metropolitan county areas can raise so that they can carry out essential functions after the metropolitan counties and the GLC have been abolished.

Mr. Holt *rose*——

Mr. Boyes: I am not giving way. I have finished.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels My concern with amendment 4 is that it will weaken the Bill, especially by paragraph *(c)* where, instead of "matters relating to local government" the amendment would insert matters

"relating to the functions of the authority."

Many things relate to the function of an authority but not to local government. The local authorities have the function of being responsible for civil defence, so that under the amendment they could support the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, as the authority does in Leicester city, or nuclear free zones, which have already cost the citizens of Leicester more than £1,500.

This is an unwelcome amendment, because it will give power to authorities such as Leicester to indulge in national politics at a local level. In other words, Leicester city will be able to undertake national campaigns against the deregulation of buses and the Transport Bill, as indeed it did on local government reform, or against the social security Green Paper. This is totally unacceptable. The advertising expenditure on national campaigns was £209,800 in 1983-84, £284,400 in 1984-85 and £377,300 in 1985-86. The amendment is therefore unacceptable to me, and I very much regret the fact that the House of Lords has sent it to us for approval.

12.15 am

Mr. Simon Hughes: Two of the amendments selected for discussion in this group are in the name of my right hon. and hon. Friends. The first is on a specifically London point. Several of the amendments suggest additional authorities about which local authorities should give information. It is suggested for example, that the health authorities, the gas boards or the electricity boards should fall into this category and that it would be relevant for the local authority to provide information about them. We believe that we should add not just the fire, civil defence and police authorities elsewhere, but also the police authority in London, which at present is excluded. The specific reason is a practical one. The police authority in London is the Home Secretary. That does not change the point that it is appropriate for local authorities, for example, to give information to the public about general crime prevention, neighbourhood watch or anti-theft measures, and it is a ludicrous anomaly that such information might be excluded by the provisions of the Bill.

Our amendment *(a)* relates to Lords amendment No. 6 which now allows that expenditure should be permitted on the promotion of the economic development of an area relevant to the local authority. We do not believe that the local authority should be allowed to spend money on promoting the economic development of an area only if the expenditure is incidental to other expenditure on economic development under section 137 or 142 or otherwise.

We agree with the Widdicombe interim report that, generally, powers of publicity should be under section 142, and our two selected amendments tie in with that. For reasons that the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) has advanced and that are well

known to all who have an informed concern about these matters, we do not believe that money should be spent on information only if it is incidental to the main purposes. We do not believe, as the Government believe, that information should be excluded if that is the only purpose for which funding is provided by local authorities.

The Government have still not appreciated the nature of the practical responsibilities of local government. I hope that they will show signs of being willing to learn from the suggestions of amendment *(f)*—which we will support if it is pushed to a vote—the amendments in the names of right hon. and hon. Friends and the other amendments that would make the measure more relevant to the day-to-day needs of local councils.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): The hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) commented on the use of the word "curious" to describe single-issue bodies. Single-issue organisations sin more often through misadventure than through malice. Enthusiasts for a certain cause get together. They tend to mix only with others who are similarly interested in that cause. Little by little they often lose sight of the alternative argument—the alternative way of answering the question that lies at the heart of the allocation of priorities outside their own narrow circle. Their newsletters and literature and their applications to local authorities for grants are often perceived by others who do not share their central preoccupation as being subversive and one-sided. One sided they often are. Subversive they very seldom intend to be, although sometimes they are subversive.

I should be glad if there were a longer period in which to assess the effects of this legislation, because considerable dangers affecting the central functions of many voluntary organisations are enshrined in too narrow a definition. I should like the Bill to be interpreted in a spirit which encourages people to fight for their corner but which also lays upon them an obligation to look beyond their own narrow interests and to take into account the often extremely respectable arguments that weigh against their preferred solution.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) said that the widening is in response to the points that were put to the Government first by parish councils and then, in another place, by other local authorities. We have tried to meet those concerns in a reasonable way by saying that in addition to being able to publish information relating to their own functions, local authorities will be able to publish information relating to the services of the different tiers of local authorities. As the hon. Gentleman said, we could have widened it to include the functions of other authorities. We thought that "services" was a reasonable compromise, and the Government stand by that decision.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the incidental publicity of voluntary organisations. Our purpose has been to follow Widdicombe: to get rid of the information function per se in section 137 and put it into section 142. However, in relation to the hon. Gentleman's 2p rate point we have had to follow the recent court judgments and say that information under section 142 that is incidental to a function under section 137 should, like the other overhead costs of section 137 functions, be charged to the 2p rate. I think that is the right decision. The hon. Gentleman's other points on the 2p rate are not a matter for discussion tonight, but we are well aware of the anxieties in the ex-metropolitan areas about them.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) referred to the Metropolitan police. His point on crime prevention is reasonably met by the housing powers of boroughs. To give a general power to local authorities to comment on the Home Secretary as a police authority would represent a great widening of their powers which we do not intend to implement in this Bill. The hon. Gentleman's amendment No. 6 (a) would widen the powers of local authorities and enable them to carry out publicity campaigns on economic development. We do not wish to give new powers to local authorities to fund economic development promotion in advance of the Widdicombe inquiry's main report. I urge him, therefore, not to press that amendment.

This meets the reasonable concerns of hon. Members and of another place that local authorities should be able to comment on each other's affairs in a reasonable way. I am aware of the anxiety of my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) that the Government may have gone too far, but the powers of local authorities are being very considerably constrained and we have to decide where to draw the line. If we made it impossible for local authorities to comment on each other's services or to give information on each other's services, we should find ourselves in considerable difficulties. Therefore, I must ask for my hon. Friend's indulgence.

Question put, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 78, Noes 170.

Division No. 116] **[12.25 am**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Haynes, Frank
Alton, David	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Barron, Kevin	Howells, Geraint
Beckett, Mrs Margaret	Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Beith, A. J.	Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*	Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Bermingham, Gerald	Kirkwood, Archy
Boyes, Roland	Leadbitter, Ted
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*	Livsey, Richard
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*	Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*	Loyden, Edward
Caborn, Richard	McCartney, Hugh
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*	McWilliam, John
Campbell-Savours, Dale	Madden, Max
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*	Marek, Dr John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Maxton, John
Clarke, Thomas	Meadowcroft, Michael
Clay, Robert	Michie, William
Clelland, David Gordon	Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*	Nellist, David
Corbyn, Jeremy	Parry, Robert
Cunningham, Dr John	Patchett, Terry
Dalyell, Tam	Pike, Peter
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*	Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Dewar, Donald	Prescott, John
Dixon, Donald	Redmond, Martin
Dormand, Jack	Rogers, Allan
Duffy, A. E. P.	Rowlands, Ted
Eadie, Alex	Skinner, Dennis
Eastham, Ken	Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*	Spearing, Nigel
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*	Stott, Roger
Fisher, Mark	Straw, Jack
Foster, Derek	Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Godman, Dr Norman	Wallace, James
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*	Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Hardy, Peter	Welsh, Michael

Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pawsey, James
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Spencer, Derek
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stokes, John
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Waller, Gary
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

Question accordingly negatived.
Amendment to the Lords amendment negatived.
Lords amendment No. 4 agreed to.
Lords amendments Nos. 5 to 9 agreed to.

Clause 4

CODES OF RECOMMENDED PRACTICE AS REGARDS PUBLICITY

Lords amendment: No. 10, in page 3, line 25, at end insert

"for the guidance of local authorities in determining whether to incur expenditure on publicity."

Mr. Waldegrave: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take also Lords amendment No. 14.

Mr. Waldegrave: The amendment deals with the codes which is the other principal commitment which my right hon. Friend has had to make on this matter. We believe that more power is needed to the elbow of the code which we seek to agree with local authorities and for which my right hon. Friend has the ultimate responsibility. We greatly regret the loss of the words "have regard to" which the Lords removed from the Bill. We do not think that the code is left with enough power as it stands and we will seek to consult the local authorities to try to agree the code in the meantime.

Mr. Meadowcroft: The Minister's words almost stuck in his throat as he moved that we should accept the Lords amendment. He faced similar difficulties in Committee in response to his hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) and when he promised to look at the matter on Report. In Committee, the Minister tried out a code and faced such overwhelming objection to parts of that code and over the problem whether the code should be enforced in statute, that in the end he was forced to withdraw it.

Mr. Waldegrave: I know that the hon. Member is a fair man and I know that he would not want to misrepresent the matter. In response to the Committee asking us to produce some outline ideas about the kind of material which might be in the code, we quickly produced those ideas. The ideas were not a code or a draft and it was not withdrawn. The hon. Gentleman is misleading the House on this matter.

Mr. Meadowcroft: If the Minister did not want to try out on the Committee a code which might have had some effect, he should not have produced one at all. As I understood it, the code that was produced was an adapted code of the sort used in the Civil Service. That is what it

was incumbent for the Government to adhere to in their practices, and the same type of code and principles should apply to local government.

The hon. Member for Halifax argued very cogently that if a code was brought in it should have the force and approval of the House and of another place. As it was not possible to do that in such a form, the Minister understandably withdrew the code and undertook to re-examine it again on report.

On Report, the Minister said that we should look at the code after the amendments had been tabled in another place. Of course, in another place an amendment was passed that went counter to what the Government wished, rather than being in their favour. It is significant that in the other place it was accepted that the code should be voluntary. It was not suggested that it would be other than for guidance. At that point, the all-party amendment that was eventually passed in the other place was moved by the noble Lord from the Conservative party, Lord Campbell of Alloway. That made the point very logically that, if the code was for guidance only there was clearly no point in having the words "have regard to" in the Bill. Lord Campbell argued that it would not be subject to judicial review and that there would be no power behind it to go to judicial review if it was for advice only. The other place therefore agreed, understandably, to take out that provision.

The point behind the Bill is that local government processes and conventions on acceptable action have broken down. If it is argued that a local government is abusing its powers by putting out propaganda, there is clearly no point in producing a code of practice based on good will because, by definition, good will has gone.

It is incumbent on the Minister either to produce a code of practice to which authorities must adhere and which has the force of law or to abandon the code completely. Their Lordships did the next best thing and simply said, "Let us accept explicitly that the code is for guidance only." They removed subsection (6), which contained the words "have regard to". That was at least partially sensible. We therefore wish to support the Lords amendment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I very much regret that we are asked to support these key amendments, because they make a mockery of the code. I take issue with the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft), because I believe that the "have regard to" provision would have meant that councils were bound to treat the code of practice seriously. If they chose to ignore it, it would not be an offence in itself. If litigation resulted, the judges would have to take a breach of the code into account in reaching their verdict. The other place has deleted that provision, and the code is now for guidance only. If we accept the Lords amendments, provided the local authority has read the code, it can proceed on the basis of ignoring it.

Members in the other place seemed to be confused because, having effectively destroyed the code, they insisted that it should be subject to approval by both Houses of Parliament. If the Lords amendments are accepted, the code will have more parliamentary weight and dignity but no legal effect, which must be nonsense. To have such a code seems to be worse than having no code. It will bring the authority of Parliament into contempt. Left-wing councillors will be able to thumb their noses at the code, although it has been approved by Parliament.

This is a serious matter. Those of us who served on the Standing Committee referred to a number of worries about how the legislation would be interpreted in relation to the finer points we had noted in our constituencies. My hon. Friend the Minister was at pains to point out that, before the other place made its decision on clause 4, it would have been necessary to have measures to deal with those finer points.

These amendments are not helpful. They go to the heart of the Bill. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can assure us that this matter will be dealt with in future legislation. The code is a vital element in ensuring flexibility in the legislation.

12.45 am

Mr. Roy Galley (Halifax): As my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) said, these amendments emasculate clause 4, which was one of the Bill's major pillars. The term used by my hon. Friend the Minister —"regret"—was meek in the light of the actions by the other place. As has been stated, the object of the amendments, which were passed across party lines with a substantial majority in Committee, was to give extra force to the code of practice by having it approved under the affirmative procedure by this House so that the courts would need to take it into account when making their judgments on whether propaganda issued by councils came within the provisions of the Bill.

It makes a mockery of Parliament and of the law to say that, the Bill having come from their Lordships' House, the code will be subject to the affirmative procedure, yet will be only for the guidance of local authorities. That sets the will of this House at naught.

I hope that my hon. Friend will give us some clear assurances that a firm code of practice that will be approved under the affirmative procedure and applicable in the courts will be brought before the House at the earliest possible opportunity.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Like my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley), I am concerned about the code of practice and its relevance to the law. I am fearful that it will be for guidance only and will not be taken seriously by the local authorities concerned.

I appreciate that the code has to be approved by both Houses of Parliament. The fact is that any local authority could read it and ignore it. The Minister, I know, has received a letter from the chief agent for Leicester city Conservatives regarding a proposed new company called Leicester Publicity Ltd., which appears to be trying to circumvent the code which I should like to see have the force of law. I refer particularly to the aims:

"the Committee accepts the need for the continued provision and publication of information in the City which is not restricted to that concerning the functions of the City Council".

It continues:

"It would, therefore, clearly be of benefit if a way could be found for the publicity and information material to continue to be produced, albeit not, of course, by the city council who would not have the statutory powers".

Will Leicester Publicity Ltd. be prevented from taking over the statutory requirements which at present the local authority is carrying out? If not, there is a problem with the code and its relevance.

[Mr. Peter Bruinvels]

There is another point of concern. The chief executive of Leicester city council says:

"I recommend that the objects of the proposed company should be orientated towards the provision of publicity and information upon issues or matters relating to or affecting the city of Leicester or any part of it or some or all of its inhabitants."

Surely the code should stop any other local organisation from being set up by the local authority to promote political propaganda and deny the ratepayers a rightful say in the administration of the local authority. That must be an abuse of ratepayers' money.

Mr. Straw: When the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) spoke, I had the impression that he thought that, if the amendments were agreed to, there would no longer be any code. I am glad to see that my impression was mistaken, and that these will continue to be provision for codes. The only effective difference is that, under clause 4 as originally drafted, authorities would have to have regard to the code, whereas under clause 4 as amended, the codes are there for the guidance of local authorities.

I hope that Conservative Members will not get too exercised on this issue, and I beg them to allow time to take its course in order to see whether the law works. It is wrong of any hon. Member to imply that a code for the guidance of local authorities can be ignored with impunity by those authorities. I do not believe that any authority or council official would for one second seek to ignore a code without clear knowledge of the consequences.

While it is true that a code for the guidance of local authorities may not of itself be sufficient to trigger a judicial review — one of the points raised in another place — none the less a transgression of a code laid down by statute for the guidance of local authorities would be prima facie evidence for legal advisers that there could have been a transgression of the principal statute, giving rise to legal action for judicial review. Moreover, one of the key sanctions provided by the Bill is not judicial review but resort to the district auditor. For that, the original complaint does not have to be couched in such detailed legal language as an application for judicial review.

We believe that the change is helpful. Conservative Members who think it is not helpful would be wise to read the debates in another place, because many peers experienced in law had complaints about the "have regard" trigger. While we believe that the change is beneficial, there is not a real and significant difference between it and what was there before. For once we should give the legislation time to work. Let us see what the practice is before rushing back with further legislation.

Mr. Waldegrave: With leave of the House. I welcome the plea of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) that we should give the code as presently drafted a chance. In so far as he is adding his weight to the voices of those who say that we should have serious discussions with local authorities about getting such a code drafted, I welcome that.

Basically I agree strongly with my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) that again this has knocked a very important part out of the structure of the Bill. No one has greater respect than I have for another place, but, like my hon. Friend, having read the debates in another place, I found myself none the wiser. Some noble Lords seemed to be of the view that the code, as we originally envisaged it, would have brought all free speech to an end while others thought that it would have no effect at all. Therefore, there was not a consensus such as was sought by my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon).

I agree very much with my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley), whose amendment was passed in Committee—not at the time with the full enthusiasm of Ministers, but we came to live with it. We now have an anomaly. The effect of his amendment was to try to build up the power of the code, but the "have regard to" trigger has been knocked out.

We have "have regard to" triggers successfully in some statutes, such as section 60 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 and section 135(5) of the Local Government Act 1972. There is quite a close parallel. Local authorities are required to have regard to a number of matters, including the provision of structure plans, before deciding planning applications. This is a trigger with which local authorities and the statute law are able to deal. We shall have to come back to this in the autumn.

This is another case where I have to ask my hon. Friends to accept the amendment for the reason given by my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens)—that we want the Bill on the statute book now. Half a loaf is better than no bread, but it is only half a loaf.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 11 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 12, in page 3, line 31, leave out subsection (4).

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take the following: Lords amendment No. 13, in page 3, line 37, at end insert—

"(5A) A code shall not be issued unless a draft of it has been laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.

(5B) Where the Secretary of State proposes to revise a code he shall lay a draft of the proposed alterations before each House of Parliament and—

(a) he shall not make the revision until after the expiration of the period of 40 days beginning with the day on which the draft is laid (or, if copies are laid before each House of Parliament on different days, with the later of those days), and

(b) if within that period either House resolves that the alterations be withdrawn, he shall not proceed with the proposed alterations (but without prejudice to the laying of a further draft).

In computing the period of 40 days no account shall be taken of any time during which Parliament is dissolved or prorogued or during which both Houses are adjourned for more than four days."

Sub-amendment *(a)*, in subsection (5A), after "issued" insert "revised".

Sub-amendment *(b)*, in subsection (5A), leave out "it" and insert "the code or revisions".

Sub-amendment *(c)*, leave out subsection (5B).

Mrs. Rumbold: I am sure that hon. Members will agree with the principle behind amendment No. 12, which was discussed in the House on Report. We consider that a code of practice issued under clause 4 should be subject to the scrutiny of both Houses of Parliament.

Mr. Boyes: Amendment No. 13 and sub-amendments *(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)* are in response to the Government's defeat in Standing Committee, when a combination of Opposition parties and some Conservative Members decided to vote with us, which I suspect was much more embarrassing to them than it was to us.

As originally drafted, the code of practice was not subject to any parliamentary procedure. The Opposition voted with what could be described in some newspapers as the "St. Andrews Mafia" to provide for the code of practice to be subject to an affirmative vote in the House of Commons. Because of bad drafting, which has been a feature of the Bill the House of Lords appears to have been left out. The Opposition amendment along the same lines in Standing Committee included the Lords.

The Government have conceded half the case for the affirmative procedure, by making the initial code of practice subject to that procedure, but illogically allowed only the negative procedure for revisions to the code. Government Members will no doubt claim that the process of revision is likely to be made more difficult if affirmative resolution orders are required for each change. We find that argument tenuous and unacceptable.

If the amendment is accepted as it stands, it will mean that the code originally subject to the affirmative procedure could be revised beyond recognition using negative instruments. Secondly, the comparative administrative inconvenience of the affirmative procedure is an asset in application to revisions to the codes. It might encourage the Department to ensure that, in consultation with local authority associations, it gets the first draft right. Sub-amendments *(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)* make revisions subject to the affirmative procedure and delete the negative provisions. We are introducing necessary and essential amendments to the code of practice and we hope the Government will see the logic and sense in our argument.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): In the arrangements for parliamentary scrutiny of the code there is, as the Opposition pointed out, a clear difference between the arrangements for scrutinising the initial code and those for scrutinising the revised code. I have some sympathy with the Opposition amendment (a) and the following amendments, but I would have less sympathy if my hon. Friend were able to assure me that the consultation involved in making sure the initial code is as good as it can be, will involve consultation not simply with local authority associations but with other groups who have an interest in this field, notably the National Union of Journalists. I understand that at the moment my hon. Friend is not prepared to consult the union before preparing the initial draft. The Government's case would be slightly stronger in resisting the proposed affirmative resolution for the revised code if the Government were prepared to consult more widely in preparing the initial code.

1 am

Mrs. Rumbold: The proposition of my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) would not present the Government with many difficulties and we would be prepared accordingly to widen the consultations for the code of practice.

I understand the logic of the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes), but his claim that we are proposing a change that will reduce the flexibility of parliamentary procedure for the code is rather an odd one for him to make. There may be circumstances where a revision needs to be made fairly quickly, either because of an inadvertent and unnoticed error, or because of a provision of the code which in practice proved impractical or unworkable. In such cases the affirmative procedure would be too rigid. There is a precedent for having a different procedure for revisions in section 14 of the Local Government Finance (No. 2) Act, 1982 for a code of order practice. I commend to the House of Lords amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 5

SEPARATE ACCOUNT OF EXPENDITURE ON PUBLICITY

Lords amendment No. 15, in page 4, line 13, at end insert—

"(5) The Secretary of State may by order provide that subsection (1) does not apply to publicity or expenditure of a prescribed description.

(6) Before making an order the Secretary of State shall consult such associations of local authorities as appear to him to be concerned and any local authority with whom consultation appears to him to be desirable.

(7) An order shall be made by statutory instrument which shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament."

Read a Second time

Mr. Straw: I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment,

(a) in line 5, after 'Before', insert

'the coming into force of this section and before'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we will also discuss sub-amendment *(b)* in line 5, after 'order', insert 'under subsection (5) above'.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State is empowered by the amendment to provide by order that subsection (1), which is the principal provision of the clause, shall

"not apply to publicity or expenditure of a prescribed description."

Before making an order, the Secretary of State is required to consult local authority associations.

We seek by the sub-amendments to widen the scope of that consultation so as to require the Secretary of State to consult before the coming into force of the clause as a whole, on such matters as the need to keep separate accounts of expenditure on publicity. The principle of consultation by the Department in general is accepted. Considering that the clause has serious ramifications for local authorities, it would be sensible to have prior consultation about the clause as a whole rather than just about orders which provide for exemptions.

Mrs. Rumbold: The amendment received wide support in the other place. The sub-amendments draw attention to the fact that we could theoretically introduce a requirement to keep a wide-ranging publicity account without making exclusions from that requirement and without consulting the local authority associations. We have no intention of acting in such a way. It would, clearly, not be sensible to bring clause 5 into effect until the scope of the account was finally determined. I urge the House to accept my undertaking that we shall engage in

[Mrs. Rumbold]

a full process of consultation before introducing an order proposing exclusions of publicity or expenditure under clause 11 or bringing clause 5 into effect.

Mr. Straw: In the light of the Minister's remarks, I will not press the sub-amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Lords amendment No. 15 agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 16 agreed to.

Clause 6

INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION OF PART II

Lords amendment No. 17, in page 4, line 43, at end insert—

"(5) Nothing in this Part shall be construed as applying to anything done by a local authority in the discharge of their duties under Part VA of the Local Government Act 1972 or Part IIIA of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (duty to afford public access to meetings and certain documents)."

Mrs. Rumbold: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Straw: While we agree with the purpose of the amendment, I hope that the Minister will comment on the anxieties that local authorities and community relations councils have expressed about whether the provisions of the Bill could conflict with section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976. If the hon. Lady cannot deal with the point now, perhaps she will write to me.

Mrs. Rumbold: I will write to the hon. Gentleman on the subject.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 7

TRANSFER REQUIRES MORTGAGOR'S CONSENT

Lords amendment No. 18, in page 5, line 3, leave out "may" and insert "shall"

Mrs. Rumbold: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): It will be convenient to discuss at the same time Lords amendments Nos. 19 to 23.

Mr. Simon Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This series does not appear in the consolidated list of amendments. Can you tell me where they can be found? I appreciate the nature of them and I do not think that they raise any matters of great substance, but they do not seem to be in the marshalled list of amendments.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is talking about Lords amendments Nos. 18, and 19 to 23. They are printed on the selection of amendments in front of me. The hon. Gentleman has the appropriate paper now, on which he will find the amendments.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 19 to 25 agreed to.

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That this House do meet on Thursday 27th March at half-past Nine o'clock, that no Questions be taken after half-past Ten o"clock, and that at half-past Three o'clock Mr. Speaker do adjourn the House without putting any Question. — *[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATION

Ordered:

That Standing Order No. 100 (Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration) be amended, as follows:

Line 9, leave out 'eight' and insert 'nine'. — *[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

PETITIONS

Shops Bill

1.8 am

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I beg leave of the House to present a petition on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) and the citizens of York in respect of maintaining Sunday as a day for family life away from six days of shopping.

On 19 December I presented a petition signed by 3,263 people. Tonight I present a petition signed by 2,037 people. I am assured by my hon. Friend that this demonstrates the overwhelming view of York electors who are concerned that seven days of trading will lead to a loss of employment, will not increase the totality of retail shopping and will break up family life, all against a background where there is no party manifesto mandate. The petition states:

"Whilst acknowledging the need for the removal of the present anomalies in the Sunday trading laws, we urge that Sunday remain a day of worship, rest and relaxation for the benefit of family and community life.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House reject the need for any other deregulation.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray."

To lie upon the Table.

Immigration (Guidelines)

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, despite the hour, I wish to present a petition signed by Councillor Mohammad Riaz of Hilton grove, Bradford 7 and 1,300 of my constituents.

The petition protests against draft guidelines issued by the Home Office and to be debated by the House later today,

"relating to representation of Members of Parliament on immigration matters"

representing

"a major new restriction on the entry of people into the United Kingdom, especially those visiting from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan, and a reduction in the rights of MPs to represent their constituents."

The petitioners pray that this honourable House will not approve such guidelines, and I beg leave to present the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

DHSS Office, Coatbridge

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

1.9 am

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I feel sure that the House will need little by way of a reminder that this debate takes place about events in a hard-pressed constituency, Monklands West, which had had more than its fair share of unemployment, deprivation and disappointment, most notably and recently with the closure of Gartcosh steelworks, which is due to be completed at the end of this week.

Many in Scotland had hoped that the new Secretary of State's "new broom" would have prevented the kind of insensitivity to which I want to refer, and I have certainly drawn these matters to the right hon. Gentleman's attention. I take this opportunity to thank the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), for his interest in these matters.

I have to say that my constituents are not impressed with Government promises of jobs in high technology, which represent a small number of jobs in real terms, when here we have a specific Government commitment, given to me by the Minister, the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment seemingly being reneged upon in circumstances which, I have to tell the House, represent, unless the Minister is prepared to correct that tonight, not just a local disappointment but, frankly a national disgrace.

This debate is about a number of widely shared concerns. It is about the need for new office accommodation for the Department of Employment and the Department of Health and Social Security in Coatbridge, which the Minister long ago conceded are considerably overdue. It is about substantial public money which has already been spent in preparing the south circular road site—some estimate that that would be in the region of £600,000—and the profoundly serious questions which I put to the Minister.

How much will postponement—if that is what it is—cost the taxpayer? Even if the project does go ahead in May of this year is not it costing £450 a day, plus interest, between now and then—so why the delay? Worse still, can we be sure that the whole investment in this excercise has not been thrown away? Will the Minister assure us that it is a postponement and not a cancellation?

The most telling question of all, which my constituents are asking, is why, after the Minister gave a very firm assurance in writing to me, in December 1984 that

"despite the tightness of funds"

he had

"authorised PSA to enter into a commitment for construction of new offices for DE and DHSS at the South Circular Road site"

which he said his Department would

"purchase on completion in 1986-87"

there is now considerable doubt about that very firm commitment?

Where has the money gone? What did the Minister do—the House will expect him to accept his responsibilities—to monitor expenditure by the Property Service Agency to ensure that his promises, his objectives, and his commitments to an hon. Member are carried out?

I place on record the Minister's letter to me, dated 14 December 1984, when he wrote:

"The delay over several years in providing a new office at Coatbridge for DE and DHSS has been a result of other pressures

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

on the Property Services Agency's Office and General Accommodation programme. These pressures will continue in the foreseeable future, but the deterioration in the condition of the existing accommodation is I know becoming very severe —and I recognise also that a decision now to relocate both Departments to the South Circular Road site could make a valuable contribution to the redevelopment of the area.

As the Minister also responsible for the inner cities, I believe it vital that Departments including PSA should bear in mind the importance of urban regeneration when determining their own programmes. I am pleased therefore to confirm that, despite the tightness of funds, I have now authorised PSA to enter into a commitment for construction of new offices for DE and DHSS at the South Circular Road site which we will purchase on completion in 1986/87.

I am copying this letter to Tom King, Norman Fowler and also George Younger".

I re-visited the existing offices just last week. What I found was most disturbing, for despite the very able management of Derek Marshall in DHSS and Pauline McMullen in DE and the vigilance of CPSA members whom I also met, the circumstances were quite unacceptable. Both buildings were constructed in the 19th century and have seen very little repairs or maintenance since then. At the DHSS I saw dampness, cracks in the ceiling, woodworm and, most unacceptable of all, members of the public huddled together in a little room and able to hear private matters discussed about other peoples' problems. The DE offers no more improvement and indeed there was also evidence of vermin infestation. All this in 1986, and to ask civil servants to stop their work to slop out water which has seeped into the building is simply ridiculous.

But the Minister need not take my word only for it. As far back as 6 August 1984 — repeat 1984 — Mr. M. Rowe, the Benefit Manager of Scotland, wrote to Mr. M. J. Mannings of the Property Services Agency saying this:

"More than a year ago you described the Coatbridge UBO as 'shockingly indequate' . . . At that time funds were available for a start in the 1984/85 financial year but a large part of this year's allocation was diverted to another project primarily, as I understand it, because there seemed to be little prospect of early progress in Coatbridge. Against that background I am shocked by the implication in your letter that the lack of those funds may now delay the Coatbridge development.

The Coatbridge UBO has inevitably deteriorated since you expressed your concern early last year, and it can only deteriorate further. I am no expert but I would not expect the building to be capable of housing our operation through many more winters."

The House will understand my feelings when on 5 March 1986 I received a letter from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, who said:

"As you know, I undertook in 1984 that PSA would purchase from the developer a new building on its completion. At that time the building was expected to cost £1·7 million and to be purchased, on its completion, in the financial year 1986-87.

Since then several things have happened to put my promise in jeopardy. The cost has gone up to £2·275 million; the date when funds are needed has slipped back to 1987-88; and the PSA has insufficient money in that year to meet expenditure on Coatbridge.

It was because I could not allow a contractual commitment to be entered into without funds being earmarked that I had to hold the project up at the last minute. I realise how disappointing this is for all concerned; and I can assure you that I am actively pursuing a solution with my ministerial colleagues in the hope that a new building can go ahead shortly. But at this point, I can do no more than promise to search for funds."

This setback to all our hopes and the doubts which have arisen have come as a shock and disappointment to everyone who has been involved in preparations for this project, including Monklands district council, whose Director of Planning, Mr. Andrew Cowe, wrote to me a few days ago, and the Scottish Development Agency, whose input in preparing the site has been massive. And I have to say in all candour that the personnel of the PSA in Glasgow, who have been involved in these preparations, have every reason to feel greatly disheartened because of recent decisions.

Perhaps the strong feelings which have been expressed to me by my constituents and others is best summarised in a letter which I received on 14 February 1986 from the project consultants Males and McDonald of Edinburgh. They said:

"In all good faith we have actively pursued this matter at the behest of the PSA's Glasgow office and we have now successfully obtained their agreement that the proposed building complies entirely with their strict guidelines for a development of this nature. Both the DHSS and DE Departments have formally approved the internal layout of the building and further, at the request of the PSA, full detailed planning permission and the necessary building warrant for phase 1 of the development have been obtained from Monklands District Council. A start on site by the nominated contractor was scheduled for 1 March with a completion date within a period of 12 months and this is following a considerable outlay by the SDA in the form of ground consolidation works.

It was, therefore, altogether astonishing to both ourselves and the PSA's Glasgow Office to hear ten days ago that funds for the project were not now forthcoming from London, when we had already been given the go ahead. In fact, at a meeting in the PSA's office in Glasgow on Monday 3 February, details of the proposed press release and media coverage were discussed."

In view of rumours which came to me in Whitehall, I must also place on record, extracts from a further letter from Mr. Ian McDonald of Males and McDonald to me dated 28 February 1986. He said:

"You did mention that there had been some suggestion that, for our part, we may have been tardy in fitting in with the PSA's timetable for this requirement. I find this most surprising, bearing in mind the way we, and all of our Professional Team, have been closely liaising with the PSA throughout the pre-contract stages of this project.

The first point to make, therefore, is that there was a considerable amount of time and effort involved in consultations with the PSA before finally agreeing the exact size and internal layout of the building. Once this had been established, a full detailed planning application had to be submitted and I feel sure that both Mr. Andy Cowe, Director of Planning, and Mr. Jack Lyall, Principal Planning Officer, will confirm that this was not a straightforward application.

It should also be pointed out that at the outset, it was made clear to us that the PSA were working to a very tight budget and it was therefore of paramount importance to achieve savings wherever possible. This I am pleased to say we have been able to do, details of which have been fully reported in our last offer dated 9 December 1985. These costs would, of course, escalate owing to the present delay. For our part, therefore, it can be demonstrated that we have performed to the timescale and remit as laid down by the PSA. The Building Contract can be commenced immediately and the building ready for occupation within the time allowed".

So we had the situation in which the need for these offices had been well established, previous disappointments had been set aside, and everyone concerned—the SDA, Monklands district council, PSA in Scotland, MSC, the Department of the Environment, the DHSS and the project consultants, Males and McDonald — were all confidently preparing themselves for the contractor to start on site on 1 March 1986, when the bombshell came. What an insensitive bombshell it turned out to be, in an area where male unemployment stands at over 22 per cent. These offices serve the village of Gartcosh where male unemployment is over 30 per cent.

The amount of co-operation PSA has received has been colossal, as one would have expected in a constituency

like mine, which the Minister described as having problems similar to the inner cities. The local planning authority, Monklands district council, altered the lines of the new post office to fit in with DHSS plans, put in new roads, introduced compulsory purchase orders on old buildings near the site, and altered the main sewer. It was in no doubt—as was the SDA, which cleared the site and is preparing to purchase it from Monklands district council—that enormous public money was spent for the sole purpose of obtaining these new offices.

Even British Telecom fitted in with the PSA's proposals, and that was no easy task, given that the new building had to be constructed around 9,000 telephone lines serviced by BTs local exchange.

It is clear that everyone in my constituency, and indeed in Scotland, who knew anything about this project did his or her utmost to see it completed — and urgently. Nobody, but nobody stood in its way. Unless the Parliamentary Secretary sets things right tonight they have been rewarded by a kick in the teeth. "Caring capitalism" I am afraid, seems to have no place in Coatbridge. Until tonight, some anonymous official in Whitehall has dashed the hopes of my constituents with a stroke of the pen. We are expected to take all this on top of the industrial havoc which has been heaped upon us—once great industries have disappeared out of sight, we have seen coal and steel decimated culminating in the closures of Bedley and Cardowan, and Gartcosh itself encapsulated the blows that our people have had to endure. To abandon or even postpone the Minister's commitment to me is to add insult to injury. It is too much to ask, far too much to ask. I invite the hon. Gentleman to use the opportunity afforded by this debate to set this matter right—and soon.

1.25 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) has explained to the House, with restraint, the disappointment he feels — which I know is shared by his constituents and the staff at the offices concerned — at the decision of my Department not to proceed, for the time being, with the new development he described. At the outset he asked whether we were talking of cancellation. That is not the case. We have not cancelled the project. As I explained in my letter of 5 March, we hope to proceed when we have found the necessary resources. I can confirm that within Whitehall we are actively pursuing the possibility of a solution. It is still our intention that the new building should go ahead as soon as possible.

It might be helpful if I remind the House of the background to the problem that the hon. Gentleman has brought to the attention of the House. He has explained why he feels that it is imperative that the present buildings should be replaced. The office of the Department of Employment, some 7,200 sq ft, is situated at Main street. The Department of Health and Social Security has two offices, each of approximately 6,000 sq ft, at Bank street and Muiryhall street. Those three properties are Crown owned.

I readily acknowledge that the DHSS occupied property at Bank street is far from ideal. Even if it were not overcrowded it would benefit from major maintenance. The property occupied by the Department of Employment was built in 1927 not quiet Victorian but very old. The galvanised roof is in need of replacement, and maintenance work has been concentrated on the interior of the building on the assumption that new accommodation was being planned. The DHSS office at Muiryhall will be used eventually to accommodate another Government Department and is in a tolerable condition.

The House will know that responsibility for the provision of Government offices rests with my Department. For many years, it has been the intention of the Property Services Agency — and indeed of its predecessor body — to rehouse the DHSS and Department of Employment offices in Coatbridge. Unfortunately, there have never been sufficient funds to meet every priority demand, and the hon. Member might acknowledge that, even when his own party was in power, it did not find the means to build new offices for this purpose.

The Property Services Agency normally provides office accommodation for Government Departments either by Crown building or by leasing property on the open market. Unfortunately, no suitable leasehold property has been available at Coatbridge, or shows any prospect of coming on to the market. For that reason we had to consider a Crown building, but lack of funds to finance it and a number of other problems have meant that this job has had to be deferred much longer than anyone would have wished.

In 1984 Monklands district council, which owns the South Circular road site, agreed that it would sell the site to the Scottish Development Agency if its development plans went ahead. This site, although satisfactory in many respects, proved to be undermined and the Scottish Development Agency therefore spent substantial sums on site consolidation works in preparation for a new building.

I understand that the Monklands district council had engaged Males and McDonald as its developer for this part of the town, and local discussions involving the PSA, the Scottish Development Agency and Males and McDonald identified this site as a suitable location for a new building of some 33,000 sq ft to accommodate the Department of Employment and the DHSS, and bring them under one roof. The proposal was that the SDA would sell part of the site to the developer who would put up a building to the specification of the PSA, and would sell it on completion to form part of the Crown Estate.

The developer envisaged construction beginning in 1985, and being completed in 1986, thus bringing to an end a long period of unsatisfactory working conditions.

The hon. Gentleman has drawn attention to the letter I wrote to him in December 1984, and has understandably sought assurances that the plans for the new accommodation for the Department of Employment and the DHSS in Coatbridge will go ahead. When I wrote to him in December 1984, the total estimated cost of the scheme was £1·84 million. That amount would have been needed on completion of construction, in the financial year 1986-87. At that time, I had reason to believe that, despite the tightness of funds for the office accommodation programme, money would indeed by available for the Coatbridge project. In good faith, I said that the Property Services Agency would purchase the building on its completion in 1986-87.

Since I wrote in 1984, however, there have been changes in the circumstances surrounding the project. First, partly on account of planning difficulties, the project has slipped back, and payment consequently would not be required until 1987-88. Secondly, the estimated cost has

[Sir George Young]

gone up by £435,000. This is an increase of nearly 25 per cent. between December 1984 and March 1986. Thirdly, there has been very severe pressure on Government funds for 1987-88 onwards. I should like to explain these reasons in more detail. First, the delay.

Mr. Clarke *rose*——

Sir George Young: I will gladly give way when I have dealt with those three points. The original design was for a two-storey building, but during consultation about the development of the plans it was found that a three-storey building would better suit the needs of the DHSS; and so a three-storey design was substituted. Secondly, Monklands district council required specific external treatment for the new building and the developer's plans were adapted to take account of that requirement. These and other factors combined to delay the potential construction start date to March 1986.

Changes in the size of the building from the original concept, the extra expense of external treatment to meet the council's requirements and inflation between December 1984 and the present time all have combined to push up the estimated cost.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for confirming that the cost rose because when a two-storey becomes a three-storey building the cost will inevitably be greater.

Will the hon. Gentleman explain, however, what later happened to the money if it had been found by the time of his letter of December 1984?

Sir George Young: The resources were available in that financial year, but we are talking about finding the resources in a different financial year. In the meantime, pressure on my Department's funds has increased and we simply cannot carry on from one year to another commitments that have not been discharged. Because of the pressure on funds for the forthcoming year we cannot put the project in the programme. Because the resources were not available, I was unable to commit my Department to proceed.

The House will know about the pressure on public expenditure in the years ahead. The public expenditure programme follows an annual cycle. The size and nature of commitments in the office and general accommodation programme for 1987-88 and the years beyond are currently being considered and decisions will be reached later this year.

Inevitably, there are more demands on the programme than can be met, and the Property Services Agency must be guided in part by the views of other departments as to their operational priorities throughout the United Kingdom in deciding where funds should be placed. It was because of the doubt about funding that I was forced to hold up any contractual commitment to Coatbridge when I learnt about the slippage in time. Until I have had an opportunity to look at the whole programme for 1987-88, I cannot make any firm commitments.

I am fully conscious, however, that the working conditions for the staff of the DHSS and DE, and more particularly the waiting accommodation for the public who use these offices, are far from satisfactory. I can assure the House that I am exploring with my ministerial colleagues in the Departments concerned how best to improve matters. Ideally, I am looking for a long-term solution which will provide adequate conditions in Coatbridge for many years ahead; but I do not ignore short-term improvements if these can alleviate the situation.

The exact nature of any long-term solution must depend on having funds available, but there are various ways of providing the money and I am now considering and exploring these in some detail.

I welcome this opportunity to explain the position regarding the new accommodation at Coatbridge for the two Government Departments. Unavoidable delays—which I have outlined—increases in cost and shortage of funds in the year concerned have all contributed to the change in circumstances since I wrote to the hon. Member in December 1984. However, I assure him that I am fully conscious of the need to improve working conditions in Coatbridge and that I am actively pursuing with my colleagues ways of achieving this as soon as is practicable.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 26 March 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SWANSEA CITY COUNCIL (TAWE BARRAGE) BILL *[Lords]*
Amendments agreed to.
To be read the Third time.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By order)*

COUNTY OF SOUTH GLAMORGAN (TAFF CROSSING) BILL *(By Order)*

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *(By Order)*

BEXLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

SHOREHAM PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

HARWICH PARKESTON QUAY BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 10 April

MILFORD HAVEN PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [18 February], That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate to be resumed upon Thursday 10 April.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (STANSTED) BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [24 February], That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate to be resumed upon Thursday 10 April.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Youth Unemployment

1. **Mr. Norman Hogg** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current level of youth unemployment in each of the Scottish new towns as compared with May 1979.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): At 9 January 1986 the number of unemployed claimants under the age of 18 in wards roughly corresponding to each of the new towns was: Livingston, 399; Irvine, 474; East Kilbride, 360; Glenrothes, 264; Cumbernauld, 389. Comparable figures for 1979 are not available because the jobcentre areas used for the 1979 count included populous areas outside the new town boundaries.

Mr. Hogg: Will the Secretary of State improve his means of collecting such important statistics? Does he agree that youth unemployment, particularly in young communities, is tragic, as is the loss of skills that results from such unemployment? Is there not a need for a special project to attract jobs into the new towns to cope with the critical state of youth unemployment?

Mr. Rifkind: We have improved the procedures. It is precisely for the reason that I gave that we cannot give the 1979 figures for new town unemployment, but can give the relevant figures today in the way that the hon. Gentleman has sought.

The hon. Gentleman will agree that the new town development corporations do an excellent job in attracting investment to their towns. Indeed, apart from the disappointing news about Burroughs, Cumbernauld has had good news about new jobs from British Oxygen Company, Isola and WKM Great Britain Ltd. Therefore, he will appreciate that a considerable number of new jobs have been attracted to Cumbernauld under existing schemes.

Mr. Forth: Does not the problem of youth unemployment in new towns extend throughout the United Kingdom, and has there not always been a problem because we tend to develop and build and attract population to new towns in advance of our ability to attract jobs and industry? Therefore, are we not really looking for a United Kingdom answer to the problem? Perhaps we should be seeking a way to attract industry and business to all new towns throughout the United Kingdom in order to correct the imbalance that we have inadvertently created.

Mr. Rifkind: I take my hon. Friend's point, but it is probably unwise to make generalisations about the new towns. Each new town has to be considered in regard to its locality, the availability of employment in that locality and the particular regional or other circumstances which may make it either easier or more difficult to attract employment to that new town.

Mr. Lambie: From the figures given today by the Secretary of State, he will be aware that the problem of youth unemployment is greatest in Irvine new town. Will

he come to Irvine and meet the officials and councillors of Cunninghame district council, who deal not only with the problem of youth unemployment but with that of adult unemployment because every third man in Irvine new town is unemployed? When is the Secretary of State coming to Irvine?

Mr. Rifkind: At the end of the youth training scheme 62 per cent. of youngsters go into either full-time employment or full-time further education. For the remainder, there are employment opportunities during the months thereafter.

The hon. Gentleman should draw attention to the good news for Irvine—for example, the decision of Beechams to create 150 new jobs over two years; Fullarton Fabrications which has created 100 new jobs at its plant in Irvine and Stevenston, and announcements by Volvo, Telex Computer Products, SCI (UK) Ltd. and other companies, all of which are either providing new jobs for Irvine or maintaining existing jobs.

Mr. Hamilton: Is the Secretary of State aware that as a result of the Government's new industrial and regional policy Glenrothes is the only new town in Scotland which is now without development area status? Consequently, the number of new inquiries about investment in Glenrothes has fallen. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman meet the regional council—I wrote to him about a month ago, but have not yet had a reply—in order to discuss that and other matters relating to the Fife region?

Mr. Rifkind: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's concern for Glenrothes new town. I am always prepared to hear about the problems of individual new towns. But there has also been some good news for Glenrothes during the past 12 months. For example, McBean and Gibson International has safeguarded more than 100 jobs by securing a major contract. Forth Tool and Valve Limited, a precision engineering company, is engaged in a £1·25 million expansion project. Coors Ceramics and Wimpey construction have each announced projects that will either create new jobs or safeguard existing ones. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman welcomes that.

Textile Industry

2. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to meet the Scottish Knitwear Council to discuss the current state of the textile industry in Scotland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to do so at present.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Secretary of State realise that if he met the Scottish Knitwear Council he would be made aware of the real apprehension felt in towns such as Hawick, in my constituency, over the outcome of the multi-fibre arrangement negotiations which are due to take place in Geneva next week, and would be made aware of the damage that could be done to domestic markets if the volume of imports were allowed to increase beyond existing limits? Is the Under-Secretary aware of the significance of those negotiations for the industry north of the border? Will he give an assurance that he will stiffen the resolve of the officials negotiating the bilaterals within the mandate to maintain the EEC limits set out there as being ceilings that are absolutely sacrosanct?

Mr. Stewart: Yes, Sir. We are fully aware of the importance of the negotiations, as is my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade. I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that the Government intend that the import levels reported should represent the maximum position of the European Community, and not the starting point for negotiations. As the hon. Gentleman said, the industry is very important for Scotland. But it is encouraging that, for example, Pringle of Scotland has announced a twofold expansion of £6 million at Hawick in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, and a new factory involving £6·6 million in Arbroath, in the constituency of my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General. That will mean 150 jobs initially, and a further 400 jobs over the next five years.

Sir Hector Monro: May I compliment the Government on their firm stand over the MFA negotiations? Will my hon. Friend ensure that pressure is kept up throughout the GATT negotiations, and bear in mind how important the textile industry is both to Scotland and to those employed in it?

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. Indeed, I know that he recently met the Minister for Trade. We are all aware of the textile industry's importance to the Scottish economy.

Mr. O'Neill: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that he has the united support of the Labour party, if not of any other party in the House, in stiffening the resolve of Ministers in negotiating the MFA? In my constituency, the unions and the management are of one mind in agreeing that the jobs of 3,000 people in Clackmannan are literally hanging by a thread. We must get a better deal than has been suggested.

Mr. Stewart: The prospect of having the united support of the Labour party for anything worries me considerably. However, I reiterate the assurance that the Government fully recognise the importance of the textile industry in Scotland.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Scottish knitwear industry has a lot to be commended for and complimented on? When he meets the Scottish Knitwear Council, will he remind it that it is in the areas of added value and quality goods that Scotland excels and that we have nothing to be ashamed of and should not hide our light under a bushel?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is right to point to the success of the Scottish textile industry. Certainly my right hon. and learned Friend and I are prepared to meet the Scottish Knitwear Council if it wishes to have a meeting in the near future.

Mr. Steel: Does the Scottish Office have any direct input into the Government's renegotiation of the multi-fibre arrangement, and if not, why not?

Mr. Stewart: Of course we do. My right hon. Friend who was then the Minister for Trade, who is now the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, and I met representatives of the industry with a joint delegation from the unions and the management some time ago. I note that

the view of the right hon. Gentleman's party on the multi-fibre arrangement was expressed in the House by the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) on 13 February 1986. He said:

"I believe that there is a need for a renewed MFA for one more term. But it would be wrong to tighten it. . . . I believe that any movement should be in the opposite direction." — [*Official Report*, 13 February 1986, Vol. 91, c. 1132.]

Mr. Foulkes: I was about to ask the Minister if he would join me in congratulating the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and the right hon. Member the leader of the Liberal party on dissociating themselves from the remarks of the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). Those remarks would threaten nearly 60,000 jobs in Scotland in the textile industry, including 3,000 in my constituency, where the level of unemployment is already 26 per cent. Will the Minister give a categorical assurance that the Government will not accept more than a 1 per cent. increase in imports from South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan, or preferably, will ensure that there is no increase in imports from those countries?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman made a number of detailed points which I am sure will be fully taken account of by my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade. It is clear that the policy of the Liberal party on this issue is rather a woolly one.

Colleges of Education

3. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received about the future of the Scottish colleges of education.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Since the publication of the report by the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council on its review of higher education in Scotland my right hon and learned Friend has received about 100 representations on the future of the colleges of education. These will be taken into account in reaching decisions on the council's recommendations.

Mr. Canavan: Does the Minister agree that the destructive proposals in the STEAC report contradict the general creative thrust of that same report, which seems to be in favour of a more open and accessible system of higher education in Scotland? The Government have already betrayed three colleges of education by closing them down, in spite of the fact that in 1977 in a Scottish Grand Committee debate many Conservative Members, including the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), argued strongly against college closures. Therefore, will the Minister ask his colleague the Secretary of State to prove that he at least has some personal credibility left by giving us an absolute guarantee that the seven remaining colleges will remain open?

Mr. Stewart: I can give the hon. Gentleman an absolute guarantee that the Government have reached no conclusion on the recommendations of the STEAC report, nor shall we until the consultation period is completed. We shall, of course, consider all the representations that have been received. There is an Adjournment debate tomorrow afternoon on this important topic. No doubt there will be full attendance by all hon. Members.

Mr. Corrie: Will my hon. Friend remember that Craigie College in Ayr covers a large rural area in the south-west of Scotland and is vital to the rural economy in that area? Youngsters go from there to be taught in a college and then return to teach in that area.

Mr. Stewart: I can assure my hon. Friend that this Government are well aware of the importance of Craigie college.

Mr. Dewar: Does the Minister accept that the strategic and overall case for closure has not been established in the STEAC report, which based its projection on the assumption that there would be only 5,000 college-based students in the next decade? Does he not remember that the Scottish Education Department itself has projected that by 1995-96 there will be over 7,300 such students, and that the Public Accounts Committee has made it clear that essential information on which a decision would have to be based is not yet even collected by the Scottish Office? In those circumstances, does the hon. Gentleman not accept that, on the basis of the STEAC report alone, it would be monstrous to threaten the existence of three colleges of education?

Mr. Stewart: The STEAC report was a well-considered document. With regard to surplus capacity, I entirely accept that we need up-to-date information. My Department is therefore carrying out a computerised analysis of the available accommodation and course requirements, in conjunction with the colleges. Therefore, it will be on the basis of that up-to-date information that decisions will be reached.

Mr. Wilson: Is the Minister not aware of the continuing uncertainty in the colleges and the real worry among staff and students about the situation? Will he give an undertaking that the Government will take no action in the interim, such as reducing the staffing of the colleges of education, or, indeed, the intake of students to those colleges, which could alter the final outcome and the decisions that have to be taken?

Mr. Stewart: I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that we shall not pre-empt any decisions that will eventually be made, although, as he will appreciate, the process of being in touch on course rationalisation is a continuing process. I am aware that, inevitably, there is uncertainty at present. We hope to reach decisions as soon as possible, having considered all the representations that we have received.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

4. **Mr. Craigen** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the financial problems facing the Greater Glasgow health board and on any discussions he has had with the board's chairman.

11. **Mr. Millan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the financial position of the Greater Glasgow health board.

Mr. Rifkind: The total revenue allocation that I have made to the board for 1986-87 is £380·3 million. That is £21 million higher than in 1985-86. My hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for home affairs, health and social work has regular meetings with the chairmen of all health boards, including Greater Glasgow.

Mr. Craigen: If the Secretary of State thinks that the health board is doing so well, why does it seem that there will be a £3 million overspend this year because of the costs that it has to bear? Does the Scottish Office feel that the Greater Glasgow health board receives sufficient recognition of the amount of in-patient and out-patient work that it is doing on a wider scale for the rest of the region, or is it simply that the Scottish Office has it in for the Greater Glasgow health board because of its pragmatic approach to privatisation?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman must have a persecution complex, either on his own behalf or on behalf of the health board, because the Greater Glasgow health board is the best-funded health board in Scotland. Indeed, the allocation that it is receiving for 1986-87 is 5·8 per cent. higher than what it received for the previous year. As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, that represents a sum greater than the rate of inflation.

Mr. Millan: Is the Secretary of State aware that, far from being adequately financed, the board is now facing a financial crisis? Is he further aware that in an answer that he gave on 17 March he said that, in real terms, expenditure in Scotland on the hospital services between 1978-79 and 1988-89—a 10-year period—would rise by only 6·8 per cent., which is less than 1 per cent. per year? That is inadequate for the Health Service as a whole in Scotland. Glasgow's share of that amount is diminishing because of the operation of the Scottish health authorities revenue equalisation formula, although the actual demands on the service in Glasgow are continuing to increase. When will the right hon. and learned Gentleman recognise that there is a genuine financial crisis in health services in Glasgow, that we need more money, and that unless more money is made available there will be severe cuts in services?

Mr. Rikfind: The right hon. Gentleman does not seem to realise that not only does the Greater Glasgow health board receive more on a per capita basis than any other health authority in Scotland, but that it receives more per capita than any regional health authority in England. Therefore, if the health board is in financial difficulty, that must be primarily its own responsibility. At the moment it receives a sum that represents £405 per capita. The next highest authority in Scotland is Tayside, with £369 per capita, and other health authorities receive smaller sums. Therefore, it is simply not credible for the right hon. Gentleman or his hon. Friends to suggest that Greater Glasgow health board receives other than a very generous provision.

Mrs. McCurley: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the redistribution or re-allocation of funds in the Health Service away from Greater Glasgow has greatly contributed to the benefit of other health authorities, such as Argyll and Clyde in my constituency? Will he ensure that that trend continues, as other health boards need the cash?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is quite correct. As Glasgow has been treated so generously, authorities such as that referred to by my hon. Friend, and other authorities in Scotland, will next year be given a provision for growth. The provision for Greater Glasgow health board will allow it to maintain its existing services. Other health authorities will have the opportunity to catch up with Glasgow, because they have been given a slightly greater share of the overall resources.

Dr. Godman: Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman at any time discussed with the chairman of the Greater Glasgow health board the appalling design failures in the Royal Infirmary development?

Mr. Rifkind: No, I have not. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and the Scottish Home and Health Department will be familiar with any problems of that kind to which their attention may be drawn.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will my right hon. and learned Friend tell the Greater Glasgow health board that if it wishes to increase its finance it should not, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) has done, take such a pragmatic—or even dogmatic—attitude to privatisation? Does he agree that if the health authorities in England can manage to raise £40 million by privatisation—a saving of 25 per cent.—the Scottish health boards, if they did not have such politically perverse attitudes, could also increase their own funding?

Mr. Rifkind: If any health boards have not properly examined the opportunity for savings to be made by tendering out to private contractors certain services which in the past have been carried out within the Health Service, those boards will have forgone a possible means of making savings which could be used to improve services to their patients.

Mr. Dewar: Does the Secretary of State recognise that the per capita comparison that he used a few minutes ago is shamelessly misleading because it does not properly take into account the enormous inflow of patients from other areas to the hospitals and specialist facilities in Glasgow? The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that the Greater Glasgow health board had been generously treated. If so, has he been able to convince its members — the people whom he has trusted with the administration of the Health Service in Glasgow and who presumably carry his confidence—about the fairness of the formula?

I want the Secretary of State to be specific in his reply to my next question. Does he accept the point fairly put by my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), that if we look at expenditure between 1978-79 and 1988-89, as revealed in the answer to me on 17 March, and apply the hospitals and community health service pay and price deflator, that proves conclusively that the increase in real terms is substantially below any figure that has been mentioned by any interested group to take account of demographic factors and the increase in medical expertise?

Mr. Rifkind: The various factors to which the hon. Gentleman has drawn attention are indeed taken into account in the SHARE formula. The fact that Greater Glasgow provides services for those outside its area is not unique to Greater Glasgow and is taken into account in the way that I have shown.

I am happy to tell the hon. Gentleman that health services in Scotland have experienced an increase in resources in real terms of 16·4 per cent. compared with 1979.

Hospitals

5. **Mr. Steel** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hospitals have been closed in Scotland since 1979.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): Since 1979, 27 hospitals have been closed, involving 1,205 beds. In the same period, over 4,200 new and replacement beds were brought into use as part of projects funded from the national building programme.

Mr. Steel: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, during the Easter recess I shall receive a petition signed by 8,000 of my constituents from Galashiels and Selkirk protesting against the proposed closure of two cottage hospitals there? Does he accept that there is widespread resentment about the fact that the Government, having built the new hospital in the Borders — we welcome that — are not giving it enough revenue to enable it to be used for the purpose for which it was designed with fully operative geriatric facilities? Instead, GP beds from the cottage hospitals are being decanted into that facility.

Mr. MacKay: The right hon. Gentleman should remind himself of the petitions and campaign in the Borders in the 1960s and 1970s aimed at replacing the old hospitals with the new £30 million hospital built at Huntlyburn. It was made perfectly clear in May 1974, in the letter conveying the approval in principle to the Borders health board, that the hospitals to be closed when the new hospital was available were Peel, Galashiels, Sanderson, Knowepark and Selkirk and the general practitioner maternity beds in the Borders. If the right hon. Gentleman wishes to renege, neither I nor the health board wish to join him.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that during the period in which these 27 hospitals have been closed the Government spent substantial sums on capital projects? Will he confirm that that expenditure greatly exceeded the expenditure during the Lib-Lab pact?

Mr. MacKay: My hon. Friend is right. The 4,200 beds represent some 42 major new hospital developments completed since 1979. Many other new hospital projects are under construction throughout Scotland.

Mr. Ron Brown: Will the hon. Gentleman ensure, failing the modernisation of the existing Leith hospital, that any replacement building is erected before the present hospital is demolished?

Mr. MacKay: The provision of maternity services in Edinburgh, and the provision of geriatric services, including the future of Leith hospital, are being considered by the Lothian health board. Following consultation, the health board will submit its conclusions to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for a decision. Until we get the health board's proposals, it would be wrong of me to pre-judge the position.

Macaulay Institute for Soil Research

6. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has now received about the proposed transfer of the Macaulay Institute for Soil Research from Aberdeen to Edinburgh; and how many were in favour and how many against.

Mr. John MacKay: A total of 157 letters from organisations and members of the public have been received. There is widespread support for the concept of the new institute. One hundred and thirty-four of the letters are in favour of Aberdeen and 23 have supported the objective assessment of the options, with some in favour of the location in Edinburgh.

Mr. Bruce: Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the widespread concern, not only among the staff of the Macaulay institute but worldwide, that the remit for the new institute will be drawn in such a way as effectively to end much of the excellent work done there? Will the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that that would be totally against the assurances given by Lord Gray? Will he recognise that the excellent work done by the Macaulay institute can be continued only if the centre is retained in Aberdeen?

Mr. MacKay: The concept of the merger has been generally welcomed, not least by the staff of both institutes. I accept that there is controversy about the location. That is why an objective assessment of the options is under way.

Mr. McQuarrie: I am sure that my hon. Friend did not want to mislead the House by saying that the concept had been agreed. It may well have been agreed. It has been agreed that the Macaulay should remain in Aberdeen. That is the important factor. This is not a Conservative or Liberal problem. The problem is fully recognised by all Members representing the Grampian region. Will my hon. Friend ensure that when the feasibility study is concluded, which will be soon, it will be publicised in such a manner as to ensure that it is seen to be fair and in favour of the Macaulay?

Mr. MacKay: My hon. Friend has an interesting concept of fairness. I recognise that both Aberdeen and Bush estate have attractions. The feasibility study will evaluate those attractions, covering the scientific, administrative and financial aspects. We should await the study before coming to any conclusions.

Mr. Eadie: Does the Minister agree that a little correction is needed here in relation to geography? The proposition is that the organisation should be sited either in Aberdeen or in Midlothian, and Edinburgh is not Midlothian, and Midlothian is not Edinburgh. Does he further agree that as a promise was given to my constituents on the Bush estate that there would be a feasibility study to decide on the technical merit of the sites, the case for Bush estate must be considered. I demand justice and fairness for my constituents, based on the promise that the Minister gave.

Mr. MacKay: It is perfectly clear that whatever decision is arrived at will not be satisfactory to both sides of this argument. Of course the hon. Gentleman is right in saying that Bush estate is in Midlothian, and he makes a fair point about the advantage of Bush. However, as I said earlier, there are advantages on both sides and the feasibility study ought to lead us to the conclusion of where the balance of advantage lies for the future of the service.

Mr. Home Robertson: This has absolutely nothing to do with rationalisation and everything to do with cuts in spending on agricultural research and sacking 100 members of staff. Is the Minister aware that he and his

colleagues stand condemned for creating an atmosphere of mistrust and fear and for forcing these two excellent research institutes to fight each other for their survival? Will he give an undertaking to consider the constructive proposal put forward by the Civil Service unions for a new Macaulay institute based on both the sites, at the Bush and at Craigiebuckler, in order to meet the growing need for land use research throughout Scotland?

Mr. MacKay: I think that shows that the hon. Gentleman is trying to have it both ways. As I said earlier, there is fairly general agreement on the sense of a merger between the two bodies, although there is disagreement about where the other organisation should be. The Government are committed to a comprehensive programme of research and development and, even after the reduction of funding, about £30 million a year of taxpayers' money will be spent in this field.

Mr. Donald Stewart: Does the Minister accept that there is no general agreement on the need for a merger? It is opposed by both institutes and by people who know the excellent work that both of them have done over a long period, so there is no reason why the question of amalgamation should have arisen at this time, apart from the Government's plans to cut them down. Will he, in the interest of an informed dialogue among all concerned, make public the remit of the steering group? The Scottish Office will make the decision at the end of the day, and everybody should have the fullest information.

Mr. MacKay: The right hon Gentleman should read again the correspondence that he has received and he will find that, as I have said, there is general agreement on the principle that it would advance and help the cause of research if these two institutions were merged. The question of the location remains to be decided, and I think that we should await the review.

Health Boards

7. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet the chairmen of the Scottish health boards to discuss the budgets for the next financial year 1986-87.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend the Minister with responsibilities for Home Affairs, Health and Social work met health board chairmen on 10 March, when the financial provision for hospital and community health services in 1986-87 was discussed in general terms. The next regular meeting with chairmen is to be held in June.

Mr. Maxton: When that meeting takes place, will the Secretary of State, if he is there, take the chairman of the Greater Glasgow health board, Mr. Donald McQuaker, to one side and tell him whether he agrees with his junior Minister, who said that even if the Treasury gave him £10 million extra tomorrow for health in Scotland,, he would not give the Greater Glasgow health board one brass farthing of it? If that is the case, is it not a disgrace that a junior Minister should express such a view about a city which has the appalling health record of Glasgow in terms of heart disease and lung cancer, which suffers all kinds of deprivation and which provides services for all the areas around Glasgow and for the whole of Scotland in terms of expensive expertise?

Mr. Rifkind: I was under the impression that the hon. Gentleman spoke from that Dispatch Box on behalf of Scotland's interests, not the interests of any one locality. He knows perfectly well that a SHARE formula is worked out to ensure that all parts of Scotland receive a fair share of the resources available. He also knows perfectly well that Greater Glasgow health board is the health board with the best endowment of health resources in Scotland. Therefore, it is not unreasonable that my hon. Friend and the Government should be seeking to ensure that other parts of Scotland also receive a fair share of the resources available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Will my right hon. and learned Friend take the opportunity when he next meets the chairmen of the health boards to discuss with the chairman of the Forth Valley health board whether adequate resources are being provided to deal with the disgraceful, Dickensian conditions that exist in the Royal Scottish national hospital for the mentally handicapped at Larbert? It is a Scottish facility which is in a disgraceful condition. Will my right hon. and learned Friend satisfy himself personally that sufficient resources are being put forward to deal with the problem?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to that particular difficulty. The matter is under consideration at present.

Mr. Tom Clarke: When the Secretary of State's hon. Friend meets the chairman of the Greater Glasgow health board, will he draw his attention to the deteriorating conditions at Woodilee hospital and remind the chairman of the conditions of the staff who are living in health board houses? Will the Secretary of State accept that nobody in my constituency will regard him as generous so long as those intolerable conditions remain?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman will be well aware that the health authority to which he refers will be entitled to growth this year to ensure proper provision. Each health board can consider how the SHARE formula operates for its particular locality. I think that the hon. Gentleman's authority is one that will benefit from that, and I can assure him that the resources that will be made available will be based on the formula, which the health boards as a whole see as a reasonable approach to the matter.

Mr. Fallon: Will my right hon. and learned Friend remind health board chairmen that health spending in Scotland last year was 26 per cent. higher per head than in England? Is that not a generous and formidable difference?

Mr. Rifkind: For many years the Secretary of State for Scotland has been able to determine within the overall resources made available whether he wishes to give priority to one area of expenditure at the expense of other areas. My hon. Friend will be aware that the total resources made available to the Scottish Office are based on a formula system which allows that flexibility. Scotland has traditionally allocated a significant share of resources to health in particular, because of the emphasis on dental and medical education and other factors. That has led successive Secretaries of State to give priority to that area.

Mr. Strang: Does the Secretary of State recognise that the SHARE formula should be implemented against a background of real growth in the Health Service, to match, not just the increased, technological advances, but the increased needs arising from higher unemployment and more elderly people? Does he recognise that the problems

in Glasgow are similar to those that we have to face in Edinburgh? Is it not a scandal that new geriatric facilities and other facilities which have been invested in have been standing idle in Edinburgh because of the Government's failure to provide adequate resources to the Health Service generally?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman does not know what he is talking about. Next year the provision for health services in Scotland will increase by 6·8 per cent., which is 2·3 per cent. above the forecast level of inflation. Since 1979 the number of medical and dental staff nurses and midwives in Scottish hospitals and health services has increased by 11 per cent. The hon. Gentleman might like to reflect on that.

Sir Hector Monro: In welcoming the fact that expenditure on the Health Service is the highest ever in real terms, may I ask whether my right hon. and learned Friend has been able to discuss with the chairman of health boards the provision of renal dialysis facilities away from the main centres of population, such as in Dumfries and elsewhere, where patients must travel enormous distances for appropriate treatment?

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my hon. Friend for the first part of his question. Regarding renal dialysis, the Department is considering that at present.

Mr. Steel: Will the Secretary of State explain to my constituents why the Government provide the capital for the long-overdue building of the new district general hospital, but not the revenue to enable the board to open the 30-bed geriatric unit as planned?

Mr. Rifkind: The right hon. Gentleman must appreciate that when the health authority to which he refers seeks the provision of a new hospital, and is aware of the resources available to it and of the SHARE formula, which ensures that it receives an increasingly fair share of the resources available, it is for the health board to decide on the utilisation of those resources to meet its commitments.

Mr. Dalyell: Is the Secretary of State aware that it costs up to £115 for a course of treatment? Is he worried about the way in which dentists have to make decisions, not on the basis of their own clinical judgments, but on their assessment of the depth of a patient's pocket if a patient is not drawing benefit?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman knows quite well that a high proportion of patients in Scotland do not make any payment at all for the dental services that they receive. He should also take into account the fact that most dentists, and indeed most doctors, would consider it perfectly proper and responsible that they should have some consideration for the overall costs of the treatment they are giving. We have to consider the best use of health resources, and that applies as much to dentists as to anyone else.

Forestry

8. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what new forestry management initiatives are presently being considered by the Forestry Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The Forestry Commission regularly takes initiatives aimed at improving its efficiency and effectiveness.

Mr. Davies: Will the Minister give an assurance that if the Government intend to introduce any further changes in forestry practice they will not follow the example that they set yesterday when they announced considerable policy changes by means of a written answer? Will he give a guarantee that there will be full consultation before any changes are introduced; that the results of such consultations will be made widely available; and that when the changes are made they will be made openly by means of a statement in the House?

Mr. MacKay: This week the Forestry Commission instituted two consultation exercises, one about the membership and procedures of the regional advisory committees, and the other about the role of and the inter-relationship between forestry and conservation. I know that the hon. Gentleman has a considerable interest in this subject. The one thing that there is plenty of in this area is consultation.

Mr. Corrie: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his statement earlier this week. In widening the grades of land that can be planted, does he accept that we must have good co-operation between agriculture, forestry and the environment to get the situation right in Scotland? Will he have discussions with his right hon. Friend in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to try to get some plan for the rural economy that will take these things into account?

Mr. MacKay: My hon. Friend is right. It is important to encourage new planting against the background, first, of considerable and increasing surpluses in food production, and, secondly, against the background of our enormous import bill for timber and timber products.

Mr. Buchan: Will the Minister bear in mind that the worst possible way of ensuring future intelligent management decisions is to allow to develop the practice of private sales of publicly owned forestry and potential forestry land? Will he also bear in mind that the forests of Scotland are there not only for the benefit of their owners, but for the amenity and future of the people of Scotland? Will he resist the ideological craziness of the Prime Minister in her privatisation schemes?

Mr. MacKay: The disposal policy of the Forestry Commission is still that which was set out by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), the former Secretary of State for Scotland. Both the Forestry Commission and the private sector have an important role to play in the increasing amount of afforestation in Scotland and in the important and interesting employment that it brings to our rural areas.

Mr. Maclennan: If the Minister values trees as an alternative to crops in surplus, is he thinking about how to provide farmer-foresters with an annual income?

Mr. MacKay: I am, indeed, thinking about that. It is one of the matters being discussed inside and outwith the Government. We are discussing how we can encourage farm forestry, and how to encourage farmers to plant trees in place of crops that are currently going into intervention. The hon. Member in correct is saying that one of our problems is how to find a way to provide an income for the farmer, certainly in the first 15 years of the life of the trees.

Mr. Home Robertson: The Minister is still somewhat equivocal about the Government's ideas for privatising the

forestry enterprise of the Forestry Commission. When does he expect his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to reply to my letter of 4 March in which I asked for a specific undertaking that the Government did not intend to sell off the Forestry Commission's forestry enterprise?

Mr. MacKay: The position is the quite clear one which I mentioned earlier and which I mentioned at our last Question Time. The disposals policy for the Forestry Commission is as set out by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger). As to the correspondence between my right hon. and learned Friend and the hon. Member, may I suggest that the hon. Member should just hold his patience.

Financial Sector

9. **Mr. Fletcher** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to promote the financial sector in Scotland, in view of the changes taking place in financial markets in the United Kingdom and overseas.

Mr. Rifkind: Scotland, and particularly Edinburgh, has a strong financial sector. I am confident that the reputation of existing institutions, and factors such as a good labour supply and comparatively low costs, mean that Scotland is well placed to face the increased competition but, more important, the increased opportunities which deregulation will provide.

Mr. Fletcher: Is it not a great tribute to the enterprise of the financial sector in Scotland that 25,000 new jobs have been created since 1979, giving a total of about 150,000 jobs? Will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that Scottish banks and brokers are given the opportunity to participate in the Government's privatisation programme as financial advisers, as there is a strong inclination in Whitehall to look only towards the City of London?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to draw attention to the very important employment prospects that the financial institutions represent. I assure him that advisers are selected strictly on merit. I agree with him that it is of crucial importance that institutions in Edinburgh should be given opportunities that are equal to those available in the City of London to compete for this business.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Freshwater Fishing

43. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what communications the Crown Office has had with procurators fiscal or chief constables about prosecution policy for alleged offences connected with freshwater fishing.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland (Mr. Peter Fraser): Circulars are issued to the procurator fiscal service from time to time. There is, however, no special policy, since the criteria applied to these cases are applied in all criminal prosecutions.

Mr. Canavan: Will the Solicitor-General send out to all procurators fiscal and chief constables a copy of the excellent letter of 8 April 1981 that was sent to me by the previous Lord Advocate, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, in which he stated that the common law position in Scotland with regard to both salmon and trout is that they are the property of nobody until they are caught and that, therefore, brown trout, for example, in an unowned and unprotected burn, river or loch become the property of the person who catches them and lands them, irrespective of whether that person has obtained permission to fish, and irrespective of whether that person is the owner of the fishing rights? Would not such advice be timely, in view of the fact that the fishing season has restarted in earnest and that ordinary, peaceful, working-class anglers are once again in danger of being bullied by water bailiffs, landlords and policemen?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: For once I am in complete agreement with the hon. Gentleman. It is indeed an excellent letter from the previous Lord Advocate, and I should be very happy if the contents of that letter became widely known. However, the hon. Gentleman should appreciate that in addition to the position at common law, which the former Lord Advocate set out, there are now specific provisions relating to protection orders, which are very important. Similarly, he should not understate the position with regard to civil interdict if some of his constituents decide to go on to other people's land and fish where they should not do so.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that many of the fines for poaching, including killing fish with cyanide and explosives, are pathetic? What is the point of introducing such heavier fines in the Salmon Bill *[Lords]* if sheriffs and judges will not implement the present maximum fine?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I do not know to which cases my hon. Friend is referring, but he will appreciate that it is not for me to mention particular sentences. However, I am surprised that he said that, because I am aware that in Tayside the sheriffs have taken a very stern view of those who adopt these particularly appalling approaches to poaching, which cause the death not only of the fish that they catch but of absolutely everything that is living in the river.

Mr. Donald Stewart: What consideration has the hon. and learned Gentleman given to the provision in the Salmon Bill that convictions may lie on the basis of the evidence of one witness? How does he think that will improve the position of procurators fiscal and chief constables, and what steps has he taken to change that?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I am not sure that it is appropriate for me to comment upon legislation that is still to come before the House. However, I remind the right hon. Gentleman that under existing salmon and freshwater fishing legislation provision is already made for there to be action on the basis of one witness.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware of the bizarre practices in Stirling, and I dare say, in other areas, whereby illegal nets which have been confiscated from poachers are later auctioned off by the courts so that they can be bought at a discount by other people who can use them? Will he put an end to this practice and give guidelines to the sheriffs on this issue?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: It is a profitable activity, to which I am surprised my hon. Friend takes exception. He will appreciate that that is not, strictly

speaking, a matter for me. There are provisions relating to the seizure of nets and catches. In those circumstances, additional fines can be imposed, not just a single fine.

Medical Accidents

44. **Mr. Lambie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the application of the law regarding medical accidents.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: My noble and learned Friend, the Lord Advocate, and I recently met the hon. Members for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) and for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), when they expressed their concern about the law, in Scotland, on the liability to make reparation for medical accidents and suggested a reference to the Scottish Law Commission.

Mr. Lambie: Is the hon. and learned Gentleman aware that my hon. Friends the Members for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) and for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) and I attended a public meeting in Kilmarnock attended by 200 people who were concerned about the law as it relates to the no-fault procedures for medical accidents? The meeting was the result of interest generated by a recent Ayrshire court case. Does the Solicitor-General intend to introduce amending legislation to change this unjust law?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I am aware of the circumstances of that public meeting. From what has been put to me, however, it would seem that it is not a matter that would be appropriate for my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate to refer to the Scottish Law Commission. I appreciate that at the meeting a strong case was put forward for a no-fault scheme. If such a scheme were to be considered, I am sure the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that it would be a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland rather than for myself.

Representation of the People Acts

45. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many prosecutions there have been in Scotland under sections 9 and 10 of the Representation of the People Acts 1948 and 1983, since 1956.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The sections referred to do not themselves create criminal offences. However, there are offences relating to the failure to comply with, or the giving of false information in response to, a requisition from the Registration Officer under regulation 30 of Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 1983. Statistics on these are not separately recorded.

Mr. Maxton: That does not surprise me. Does the Solicitor-General agree that when his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State introduces his poll tax and the electoral register becomes the major source of information for the new register, the number of prosecutions will increase dramatically? Will not the fines increase dramatically? Is it not possible that some poor people will finish up in prison? Is that not a threat to democracy itself?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: It astonishes me that the hon. Gentleman has still not read the Green Paper. I shall try, very slowly, to explain to him yet again that there are to be two separate registers and that there is to be a community charge register. It is true that the fines for failure to be registered under the community charge will be greater, but I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman takes exception to that. If people refuse, to go on to the community charge register, that will amount to an evasion of tax. I should think that the hon. Gentleman would strongly disapprove of that.

Mobbing and Rioting (Charges)

46. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland whether the Lord Advocate has instituted any changes in the use and manner of libelling of charges of mobbing and rioting, in the light of the comments in the letter to him from the chairman of the Scottish Law Commission dated 24 February; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The Lord Advocate has instructed that the chairman's comments be borne in mind when preparing indictments in cases of mobbing and rioting, and the matter is to be further discussed by me with Crown counsel.

Mr. Wallace: Does the Solicitor-General acknowledge that the import of the letter from the chairman of the Scottish Law Commission was that some practical steps could resolve the problem, rather than the introduction of new statutory offences? Using the same logic, does the Solicitor-General consider that, rather than introduce the new statutory Public Order Bill, as it applies to Scotland, he should rely more on sensitive policing, as practised by the police for many years? We should not go down the road proposed by the Bill, which could bring the police into a degree of political conflict.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I am not sure what that question has to do with mobbing and rioting. However, I recall that during the miners' strike a number of Opposition Members saw the then Secretary of State and myself to say that, in certain circumstances, they thought the existing common law in Scotland was inappropriate to deal with such public order situations.

Law on Diligence

47. **Mr. Hugh Brown** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland when he expects to be in a position to announce decisions on the report of the Scottish Law Commission on the law on diligence; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The formal consultation period has just ended, although arrangements have been made for certain consultees whose views the Government are anxious to have to be able to submit their comments late. I am not in a position to say when our consideration of the comments will be completed, but I can assure the House that my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate and I wish to make early progress with reform of the law.

Mr. Brown: As the subject has been under consideration for almost 15 years, may we have some idea whether the legislation will be introduced this year or next year, particularly as there may be an increased demand for the services as a result of criminal enforcement in relation to the community charge?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The consultation period ended just a week ago. I can only emphasise once again that we are keen to have legislation introduced on this matter at the earliest possible opportunity. I should certainly by very pleased indeed not to have to answer any more questions from the Dispatch Box about warrant sales.

Medical Accidents

48. **Mr. McKelvey** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will refer to the Scottish Law Commission for its consideration the law concerning medical accidents; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate and I recently met the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes). I am not aware of any evidence that the law in Scotland on medical accidents is in need of review by the Scottish Law Commission. As I have already said, consideration of a no-fault scheme to cover such accidents would be for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. McKelvey: Will the Solicitor-General nevertheless make it clear to the Lord Advocate that there is great unhappiness in Scotland about the law as it stands? Will he suggest, for instance, that the Pearson commission be reconvened to consider the operation of the law in New Zealand and to see whether a similar law could be moulded to fit the Scottish scene?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley passed me a report on the New Zealand experience, and I am ensuring that it is passed on. My information about the Swedish scheme, however, is that it is being reviewed because of the great administrative expense arising from its operation.

Peace Tax

3.31 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to allow people to withhold that portion of their tax which is at present spent on arms and related purposes, and to facilitate the payment by them of sums so withheld to peaceful non-governmental purposes.

Early this morning I went to Gloucester prison for the release of Arthur Windsor, an old age pensioner who is not a criminal but could more aptly be described as a prisoner of conscience. He was sent to prison for refusing to pay a tax demand for about £100 to the Inland Revenue on the ground that he had strongly held conscientious objections to the financing of warfare.

Mr. Windsor is not a tax dodger. He tried to make the payment to the National Health Service or the Overseas Development Administration, but the cheques were returned. As a result, he became the first conscientious objector to be gaoled in this country since conscription ended more than a quarter of a century ago.

Way back in 1916, during the first world war, Parliament gave statutory recognition to the rights of conscientious objectors who wished to opt out of military service. Today, in the nuclear age, we have a different type and scale of warfare. Because of the possibility—indeed, the probability—of indiscriminate annihilation if nuclear warfare ever comes to pass, there are strong grounds for arguing that recognition of the right of conscientious objection should be extended to those who have strongly held conscientious objections to financing warfare through taxation.

The annual budget of the Ministry of Defence is about £18 billion, much of which is spent on weapons of war and mass destruction. Many people strongly object to the fact that when millions of people in the Third world face starvation, this country alone proposes to spend £20,000 million of taxpayers' money on the Trident nuclear weapon.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Over 15 years.

Mr. Canavan: My Bill proposes the establishment of a peace fund. Individuals would have the right to assign part of their tax to peace-building projects financed through the peace fund. I do not propose any new tax or any net increase or decrease in taxation. If a person chose to register his or her conscientious objection to the financing of warfare through taxation, the Treasury would make an appropriate payment for that person into a peace fund.

Under my proposals, the normal payment would be the average individual contribution to the defence budget. As I said earlier, the total defence budget is about £18 billion per year; the electorate is about 40 million. If we divide the first figure by the second, we get an amount of £450 per annum. That is how much the average person contributes to the budget of the Ministry of Defence. Under my proposals, therefore, an individual would have the right to demand that the Treasury paid up to £450 per annum into the peace fund rather than to the MOD budget.

The peace fund would be administered by trustees whose appointment would be subject to parliamentary approval and who would be accountable to Parliament. The trustees would have to present an annual report to Parliament. The peace fund would be disbursed for peace-building programmes—for example, by payments to voluntary agencies working in the Third world such as OXFAM, Christian Aid, the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development, the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund, and War on Want.

Some Conservative Members may say, "Wait a minute; this might create a dangerous precedent. It would open the doors for all sorts of people who object to various items of Government expenditure and would encourage them to withhold their taxes." It would be ironic if a party which supposedly believes in the freedom of the individual were to deny the freedom of an individual in this case.

I argue more strongly that my Bill creates no precedent; it simply follows the precedent which was enacted in the 1916 legislation, when Parliament gave statutory recognition to those who have conscientious objections to military service. If it is morally wrong to kill people, it is also morally wrong to pay other people to do the killing or to pay for the weapons which kill. The horrific, indiscriminate nature of modern warfare, particularly nuclear warfare, reinforces the conscientious objections of those who feel that the taxation system conscripts them into paying for the most destructive and evil war machine in which this country has ever been involved.

Many people have strong moral objections to participating in such a crime against humanity. My Bill would give them the right to transfer some resources from warmongering to peace-building. My Bill is a humane and sensible extension of the rights of conscience. Therefore, I ask all hon. Members to support it. Perhaps not everyone will agree with the pacifist ideals of people such as Arthur Windsor, but nobody can doubt the strength of his conviction and the sincerity of his beliefs. British history books contain many examples of extra-parliamentary campaigns by people who had the courage of their convictions to stand up and be counted; at times they resorted even to civil disobedience and as a result were gaoled for their beliefs before this House eventually responded to their legitimate demands for a change in the law. Arthur Windsor has joined that list of brave people. I ask the House to salute his courageous example by supporting my Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Dennis Canavan, Mr. William McKelvey, Mr. Bob McTaggart, Mr. Stan Thorne, Mr. Robert Parry, Mr. Eddie Loyden, Mr. Ernie Ross, Mr. Alfred Dubs, Mr. Bob Edwards, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. Allen Adams and Mr. Gavin Strang.

PEACE TAX

Mr. Dennis Canavan accordingly presented a Bill to allow people to withhold that portion of their tax which is at present spent on arms and related purposes, and to facilitate the payment by them of sums so withheld to peaceful non-governmental purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 April and to be printed. [Bill 124.]

ROYAL ASSENT

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Museum of London Act 1986.
2. Law Reform (Parent and Child) (Scotland) Act 1986.

[Mr. Speaker]

3. Local Government Act 1986.
4. Peterhead Harbour (South Bay Development) Order Confirmation Act 1986.

Immigration (Members' Representations)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

Mr. Speaker: I must tell the House that a great number of right hon. and hon. Members have already sought leave to speak in the debate. I propose to impose a 10-minute limit on speeches between 6 o'clock and 8 o'clock, and I hope that those who speak before that time or who may be called afterwards will also bear that limit in mind. I think that every hon. Member who wishes to speak may then be called.

3.41 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): When we last discussed this matter on 29 October last year, I explained to the House why we felt that there is a need to review the arrangements for dealing with representations by right hon. and hon. Members in immigration cases. On 11 February, I put proposals before the House in the form of a draft guidance, setting out how the Home Office proposed to handle such cases. That announcement looked forward to a process of consultation, and to this debate, before new arrangements were introduced. I am grateful that so many right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House have, in meetings and letters, offered their comments on our initial draft proposals. The consultation process has turned out to be a real one, as it was meant to be. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State saw a large number of hon. Members from all parts of the House to hear their views. He received a number of letters from hon. Members and a paper from the parliamentary Labour party. The results of that consultation are set out in the revised draft guidelines which I presented to the House on 19 March and which are the focus of today's debate.

I hope that today we are, as a House, showing our readiness to face responsibly the consequences of procedures and practices that have grown up over the years under different Governments. they have grown up without previous debate and without—so far as I know—any guidance to hon. Members on matters that touch the constituency responsibilities of a great many of us and go to the heart of one of the central and essential functions of the State—the control of immigration.

I have been anxious to proceed in this matter, to the greatest possible extent, by agreement. Under different Governments, the House has for many years recognised the need for immigration control. In some ways it is perhaps surprising that this is the first time that we have thought it necessary to review the arrangements under which hon. Members make representations in immigration cases. The procedures have grown up by convention, not law, and it has become accepted that, as a matter of practice, the mere fact of a representation by a right hon. or hon. Member should, in the general run of cases, be sufficient to achieve the deferment of the removal of a person from this country. That is a unique facility given to hon. Members by custom, and valued by the House. I can think of no other area of policy in which an hon. Member can unilaterally and immediately alter the course of events before any consideration by a Minister. We need

to be sure that the arrangement can be handled in future in a way that tries to ensure that it does not collapse under the weight that it is asked to bear.

I hope that the central issue of today's debate will be not the nature of our immigration control but the way in which we can achieve the right balance between the ability of hon. Members to carry out their responsibilities to their constituents and the need for effective and efficient immigration control in accordance with the Immigration Act and the rules approved by Parliament.

The guidance that we have tabled is not an attempt to tighten immigration control. What we have been trying to do is to give back to the control the effect that Parliament intended, without removing the rights of representation which have been developed in the way that I have described.

We recognise the need for an immigration control which is both firm and fair. We recognise the commitment to the admission of wives and children of men who have settled here. We recognise that the system enables ready admission for genuine visitors to the United Kingdom. We have not changed the criteria under which visitors are dealt with when they arrive in this country.

Therefore, there is nothing in the proposals before the House today which changes the policy, criteria or practice of immigration control. The guidance is there in an attempt to bring order to traditional arrangements of representations which, in their sharp increase over the past three years, are threatening to undermine the control.

I give the updated figures. In each of the three years 1980, 1981 and 1982, representations by right hon. and hon. Members were made in about 1,000 cases involving refusal at a port of entry. The number of cases has increased in each year since then to about 2,500 in 1983, 3,500 in 1984 and about 5,700 in 1985.

In the first two months of this year the number of representations in ports cases has been about 1,200, at what is usually the lightest period of the year. That would make an annual total of over 7,000 cases. Those figures do not include second or subsequent representations on the same case.

I must underline the fact that the growth in representations has occurred without any change in the law regarding the admission of visitors, without any material change in the rules and without any change in the criteria applied by the immigration service.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I am sure that the Home Secetary would wish to be fair in what he has said about the increase in Members' representations. I am sure that he will agree that that reflects the increased number of refusals. Only a small number of people who are refused entry into Britain turn to a Member of Parliament for assistance; as there is no effective right of appeal, that is not surprising. Therefore, will he give the figures for the number of people refused entry last year, which was substantially above the figure for 1984?

Mr. Hurd: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's analysis. Between 1982 and 1983 there was a 14 per cent. increase in refusals but a 150 per cent. increase in representations. As I have said, there has been no change in the criteria applied by the immigration service.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Can my right hon. Friend reveal how many representations in that shocking rise come from Members who are not connected with the constituency involved? Of those, how many hon. Members fail to put their representations or reasons for delaying the deportation in writing within the 12 days which is requested?

Mr. Hurd: I cannot give that information. The last time we debated this subject we looked back over such points as my hon. Friend raises. I am rather keen to look forward today to the kind of guidelines which would seem reasonable to the House for the future and which, incidentally, would deal with some of his points.

The effect of the process that I have described has been to draw more and more immigration officers away from their work at the initial control; that has slowed down the clearance of the huge majority of passengers who are eligible for admission.

The process of handling the volume of contested cases has meant that ineligible passengers have been able to spend long periods here on temporary admission while their cases were being considered. That is obviously not the control that Parliament intended or that the public have a right to expect us to operate. I hope the House will accept that I am concerned that, unless the system of making and handling representations is improved, it will crack under its own weight as passenger traffic continues to rise year on year.

I should add, to complete the general picture of the problem that we face, that the number of representations made about immigration cases generally—that is to say, after entry as well as on entry cases—increased from about 9,000 in 1981 to just over 16,000 in 1985. Those are the concerns that have led to the guidance and the process of consultation.

The latest version of the guidance, which follows consultation, differs from the draft guidelines announced on 11 February in several respects, but not in relation to the central issue of the need for sensible time scales to be accepted for the making of representations. That is the principal element in making our arrangements work.

The new guidance does not include the facility that we originally suggested for right hon. and hon. Members to contact the immigration service at ports to arrange deferment of removal, and to obtain the reasons underlying the decision to refuse leave to enter. The intention behind this proposal, which was put forward in response to views expressed by some right hon. and hon. Members, was that Members of Parliament would be better able to judge, on the basis of the information that they obtained direct from the ports, whether representations to Ministers were justified. These are issues of practicality, not great questions of principle.

To represent those original proposals as being in some way unconstitutional or as somehow restricting the rights of Members of Parliament seemed to me to puff up out of recognition something that is essentially a question of convenience.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Hurd: Perhaps I may finish this part of the argument before giving way to the hon. Gentleman. I may have met his point by then.

There was, and is, no suggestion at all that a right hon. or hon. Member should be denied the right to make these representations either to me or to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State. The question was simply

[Mr. Hurd]

whether the "stop", which normally precedes any representations, should be imposed by a Member of Parliament, as happens now, through a private office, or whether it should be imposed by a Member of Parliament in direct communication with the port, which would enable him to learn more of the case before deciding whether to impose a stop. At that stage, there is no question of representations. Hon. Members do not need to make representations or to convince anyone in order to impose a stop. The question is what channel should be used. Does the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) still want to intervene?

Mr. Faulds: Yes. The right hon. Gentleman mentioned that there had been consultations prior to the issuance of the first guidelines. If that consultation had been as wide as it should have been, the foolhardy and misguided first guidelines would never have been introduced. I cannot remember that I was consulted about these matters, and I have as many immigration cases as most other hon. Members.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman's intervention neatly illustrates one of the laws of politics, which is that whenever one begins to consult people, they immediately say that one should have started consulting them earlier.

Mr. Faulds: Did the Government consult before the guidelines?

Mr. Hurd: We consulted right hon. and hon. Members on the basis of the first draft; that is how we arrived at the second draft. [*Interruption.*] We consulted, and the results are before the House. But in response to the feeling expressed by right hon. and hon. Members in several parts of the House, we proposed to retain the present facility of ringing my private office, or that of my hon. and learned Friend, to ask for the removal of a passenger to be deferred while representations are made and considered. I am therefore ready to see whether that traditional channel for the imposition of a stop can effectively be sustained——

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: I will give way later. Perhaps I may be allowed to get on.

Ms. Short: It is on a point that the Home Secretary raised.

Mr. Hurd: Very well.

Ms. Short: The right hon. Gentleman said that there was absolutely no constitutional point in these guidelines. I must challenge that. The guidelines say that if a Member of Parliament gives honest advice to a constituent about how a likely visitor will be treated, a mark will be put against the visitor and he or she is likely to be refused. That is a serious point and represents a new development.

Mr. Hurd: I shall come to the point.

Hon. Members have expressed concern about the role of the constituency Member of Parliament. The draft guidelines have been amended to reflect the need for hon. Members to act for a colleague when he or she is not available. I would not want to go further than that in the draft guidelines, but I assure the House that these arrangements will be operated flexibly. I assure the House, too, that there is no intention to change the existing arrangement whereby the staff employed by hon. Members can make representations on their behalf to my private office or to that of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State.

In the revised draft guidelines, we also thought it right to clarify the proposal about temporary admission and detention. There is no intention—I must underline this to the hon. Lady the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short)—to apply anything other than the normal criteria for the grant of temporary admission in cases where a passenger has received advice from right hon. and hon. Members before travelling to this country.

However, temporary admission will not be granted readily if there is clear evidence that a right hon. or hon. Member has advised a passenger, who he knows is most unlikely to be granted admission, to travel without entry clearance on the presumption that he will gain access to the country on temporary admission simply as a result of representations made to me or my hon. and learned Friend. We think that it would be wrong to allow passengers refused leave to enter to benefit in that way. Temporary admission is designed as an alternative to detention and not as a variant of leave to enter.

Mr. Faulds *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman. He has said his piece.

We have also taken the opportunity to explain in the guidance the provisions of the immigration rules relating to marriage and the effect of them on those who become engaged to marry, or who marry while on temporary admission. The rules require those who wish to come here to marry to obtain prior entry clearance from abroad. We think that it would be unfair to those who abide by the rules and seek entry clearance from abroad to allow those who become engaged or who marry while on temporary admission to gain advantage by avoiding the requirements of the law in that way.

We have seriously considered a practical point which has been made on both sides of the House, about time limits for making representations. It is crucial if we are to get the balance right, to have sensible time limits. We propose an increase fom 10 to 12 working days for port refusal cases. I accept that there will have to be reasonable flexibility to deal with cases in which right hon. or hon. Members face real difficulties. However, we shall be looking to see that the limits are properly observed.

In the revised draft guidelines, we have also reflected the concern which some right hon. and hon. Members have felt about after-entry cases in which there is no right of appeal or where that right has not been exercised. We accept that obtaining information in those cases may not always be as simple as it should be when an after-entry case has been dealt with by the appellate authorities, so we propose that the same twelve working days time scale should be applied.

I hope that, in putting out the guidance, we are clarifying for right hon. and hon. Members the way in which my hon. and learned Friend and I have to approach the cases put to us. There is still some discussion and dispute about that point. As the guidance explains, in passenger cases the decision in law is properly that of the immigration officer. The law provides for the right of appeal from abroad against an adverse decision. When we

receive representations from right hon. and hon. Members, we are being asked to override the decision of the immigration officer outside the appeal machinery. Therefore, we must look for new information that was not before the immigration officer. That information has to be compelling if it is to push us towards overturning the earlier decision.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): If 12 days can be difficult, five days—in the case of making an appeal where an appeal has been dismissed and the Member requests deferral—can be virtually impossible. That is especially so not only for mail delays in representations, but if a law centre wants to make a detailed point on new and significant information. That is relevant to the point that the Home Secretary was making. I suggest to the Home Secretary that the five-day period should be extended. If not, we will be in dispute on what is new and significant representation and what is representation in the first place within the five-day limit.

Mr. Hurd: The point of the distinction is that, in the cases which have gone to appeal, the facts are there. There may be a difference of view about the interpretation of them, but there is no need for further devilling about the facts. Therefore, five working days seems to be a reasonable limit in those cases, whereas 12 working days might be necessary in cases which have not gone to appeal.

Mr. George Park (Coventry, North-East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: I had better get on. I have given way quite extensively.

Mr. Park: I just want to make a quick point.

Mr. Hurd: All right.

Mr. Park: Assuming that hon. Members put their initial queries to the immigration service, how many extra staff will the right hon. Gentleman allocate, and what additional facilities will there be for the officers? The staff are grossly overworked now.

Mr. Hurd: We have abandoned that suggestion because a considerable number of right hon. and hon. Members did not think that it was the right way of doing it. I have tried to explain why I have put forward the proposals, but I may have confused the hon. Gentleman. We are not pressing that point now.

Such is the guidance that we propose, after the consideration that we have given to all the views that have emerged from the process of consultation. In addition to that review, and because we expect further pressure on the ports, we have increased the staffing provision for 1986-87 by 52 posts over those originally planned, and announced further financial provision for the immigration service in later years of about £3 million per year.

The new scheme for handling representations, together with the increased provision that I have just announced for the immigration service, provide a firmer basis for facing pressures on immigration control this year than last year. However, we cannot be sure that the steps that we have taken and the measures that we propose will meet all possible contingencies in the coming months.

I have no doubt that the vast majority of people in this country want a firm immigration control to be sustained. I should like to see that achieved by continuing to take full advantage of our traditional arrangements of relying on the judgment of immigration officers at the ports of entry, as the law provides, but the strain placed on our on-entry system of immigration control from rising passenger traffic, increased refusals and the growth of representations will remain severe. It strains the patience of the vast majority of passengers waiting in line for a brief interview with an immigration officer; it strains the commitment and job satisfaction of staff; it strains the effectiveness of the control itself. Therefore, we shall have to keep a close watch on the way in which that position develops during the summer and be ready, if necessary, to adapt further our arrangements and systems.

Mr. Faulds: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: I shall give way at last to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Faulds: I am most grateful to the right hon. Gentleman because he will know that those of us who are sitting around here are immediately and intimately connected with these particular problems. I very strongly support—*[Interruption.]* If you do not like it, you do not have to listen. If you are quiet, I will get it over quicker.

I very strongly support the length of term in which hon. Members are allowed to make representations. I think that that has been abused in the past. But one of the real problems about the length of stay of those who come in on temporary admission is the lack of staff in the Minister of State's office. If there were more people dealing with the problems in his office, temporary admission would not be as extended as it frequently is in many, many cases.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State has a substantial number of staff. I am sure that he will want to take up the hon. Gentleman's point when he replies.

My judgment, as far as I can make one this afternoon, is that the proposals that are now before the House, which have emerged from the helpful process of consultation, are sensible and will help to enable right hon. and hon. Members to discharge their responsibilities in a way that is more compatible than previously with an effective immigration control. I intend that the new changes should be introduced from 1 May. I commend the proposed arrangements, and I trust that they will be welcomed by the House.

4.4 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): Last Friday afternoon, just before I left the House for the weekend, I received a telephone call from a woman in my constituency. She told me that she was expecting her mother to arrive at Heathrow on Sunday afternoon, on a family visit. She wanted to know all the telephone numbers at which I would be available throughout Sunday in case her mother had any difficulty in being admitted.

I regularly receive such telephone calls, together with similar letters and visits to my constituency advice bureaux. Sometimes the visitor does indeed have trouble and I am telephoned and asked whether I can sort it out. Sorting out such a problem can take many hours, even days. Sometimes, as in the case last weekend, there is no trouble and the visitor is admitted without difficulty, but in each of those cases, whether I am called upon to assist

[Mr. Gerald Kaufman]

or not, there is, on the part of my constituent, the apprehension of trouble, the fear of trouble, the need to take advance precautions against trouble.

Those telephone calls do not come from constituents of mine expecting visitors from the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand or even South Africa. They do not come from constituents expecting visitors from Poland, although I am proud to say that I have substantial numbers of constituents of Polish origin. No, those calls come from constituents whose families originate from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. It is the discrimination against visitors from those and a certain number of other countries, mainly in the new Commonwealth, that lies behind the debate.

That discrimination is demonstrated in the published statistics. They show that, for example, in 1984, a passenger from Ghana had one chance in 22 of being refused admission to this country while, for Canadians, one in 8,890 was refused admission. Refusals to passengers from Canada were 0·01 per cent., one hundredth of 1 per cent. of those seeking admission. The figure for Australia was 0·02 per cent., and for New Zealand and the United States it was 0·03 per cent. For India refusals were 0·9 per cent., nine tenths of 1 per cent. —90 times the Canadian average.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: Not just yet. In a little while.

The figure for Pakistan is 1·3 per cent., 130 times that of Canada. For Bangladesh is 1·7 per cent., 170 times the Canadian average. What is more, the discrimination in the refusal rate has been growing. The tiny Canadian percentage is half what it was in 1978, the last year of the Labour Government. The Australian and United States percentages are unchanged. The New Zealand percentage is up by 50 per cent. but the actual percentage increase of 0·01 per cent. is scarcely worth noticing. The actual number of refusals is up from 18 to just 27, in a year. Pakistan, too, has a 50 per cent. increase, but that means that the number of refusals is up from 946 to 1,415. The figure for Bangladesh is up by 77 per cent. and for India by 130 per cent.

There is a huge differential between the treatment of travellers from the old Commonwealth and the United States on the one hand, and the new Commonwealth and Pakistan and the other. That differential has widened. However, it is not simply statistical. It is subjective as well. British citizens whose origins lie in the new Commonwealth and Pakistan feel that they are being treated differently and worse. They believe that that difference is due to racialist attitudes—*[Interruption.]* That is what they believe. That is what my constituents tell me when they come to see me.

Mr. Marlow: May I help the right hon. Gentleman? Is it not the case that the economic differences between the United Kingdom and the Indian sub-continent are much greater than those between the United Kingdom and the old Commonwealth and the United States? Therefore, is it not the case that many people from the Indian sub-continent would wish, one way or the other, to gain entry to the United Kingdom, whether it is legal or not? Therefore, is not vigilance right and proper? Can the right hon. Gentleman not tell his constituents that that is why those differences occur?

Mr. Kaufman: When women constituents of mine have fallen in love with a man in India or Pakistan, and when they are born in this country and are British citizens, telling them that they are not allowed to marry the man of their choice and live with him in the country of their nationality is not something that I find easy to explain. The hon. Gentleman may be more persuasive than I am. I shall cover the other matter which the hon. Gentleman raised in the course of my speech.

Constituents seek the help of their Members of Parliament because of their subjective feelings. In the context of this debate, we are not talking principally about those people seeking admission for permanent settlement in Britain. Instead, we are talking about would-be visitors, the people who just wish to come to this country for a short time and then leave. The House should be aware that if these people are admitted, almost all go away again. These people are not dominated by some passionate yearning to enter this country as visitors and then to go into hiding in order to benefit from the right to live under Thatcherism.

People given temporary admission are, in the Government's eyes, by definition, the most suspect group as they have not been allowed to exercise their right as visitors to enter automatically. Even in that group, in 1984, only 2 per cent. failed to leave this country. People, mainly from the Indian sub-continent, approach Members of Parliament because they have found that their visitors are not being admitted.

Such requests for help have given rise to the stop system under which a Member of Parliament has the right to prevent a removal until a ministerial reply has been obtained on the request for admission. Although the number of requested stops has substantially increased, that is not because hon. Members are dealing with a much higher proportion of refusal cases. The proportion of stop cases has only slightly increased. They have increased because the refusals have increased. The necessary increase in the use of the stop system caused both by the disturbing rise in the number of refusals and the growing knowledge among those affected that a Member of Parliament can help, led to the strange events of last October and the allegations by the Minister of State, Home Office.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): As my right hon. Friend has said, there has been an increase in visits. In cases that are referred to hon. Members, the Minister's letter is often couched in terms which imply that the Minister of State has doubts about the position. In some cases the period in this country is only a few months. However, the reasons advanced for the refusal of entry are often trivial. If they were not so bloody trivial and immigration officers granted formal admission, hon. Members would be relieved of this task.

Mr. Kaufman: If would-be tourists from the United States were subjected to the kind of questioning endured by tourists from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, this country's dollar inflow would be cripplingly damaged.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: I will not give way at this stage, but I may do so later on.

Before my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Bidwell) intervened, I was referring to the allegations

last October by the Minister of State. We should be fair to the hon. and learned Gentleman as it seems that he might have become overwrought by the increase in traffic last year from Bangladesh. If so, he must blame the high commission in Dhaka which issued two press notices which might almost have been interpreted as invitations to enter Britain. One, headed "Changes in British immigration rules" said:

"The Immigration Rules governing persons who wish to settle in the United Kingdom are due to be changed on 26 August 1985. The effect of these proposed changes will be that a husband whose wife is settled in the United Kingdom will be entitled to apply to join her there whether or not she has taken British citizenship."

The other press notice, headed "Visitors to the United Kingdom" stated:

"Following speculation about the recent changes in British Immigration rules the British High Commission in Dhaka has confirmed that these changes do not in any way affect visitors to the United Kingdom. There is no mandatory requirement for Bangladeshi nationals to have Entry Certificates or visas for visits to the United Kingdom."

Be that as it may, during Home Office questions on 24 October 1985, the Minister of State, answering a perfectly innocent and sensible question from my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), suffered a rush of blood to the head and launched an attack on certain unspecified hon. Members who, he claimed, were

"abusing their right to make representations in cases."

In response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) — a question, as one might expect which was, if possible, even more innocuous than that from my hon. Friend the Member for Ladywood, —the Minister of State repeated his charge. He said:

"something is going wrong with the system because some hon. Members are abusing—I am not afraid to use that word—that system." — [*Official Report*, 24 October 1985; Vol. 84, c. 412-420.]

Hon. Members were naturally interested to know who those dishonourable Members might be. Demands were made for a statement and the Minister of State obliged not with a statement but with one of those bogus points of order which, until Mr. Speaker put a stop to them, Ministers have been wont to resort to in lieu of statements. The Minister of State sent me a letter in which he claimed that he was

"Setting out the various abuses which have occurred."

The Minister of State continued defiantly in his letter:

"I want to make it plain that I would not be cataloguing the abuses if I were not able to name names."

The Minister of State's letter listed six alleged abuses, none of which actually was an abuse and some, if not all of which, have at one time or another been employed by hon. Members on both sides of the House who deal with these cases. Indeed, in his letter, the Minister of State missed out the practice of one Conservative Member who actively touts for custom. [HON. MEMBERS: "Name him"]. The Minister refused to name names, but I should be very glad to name the hon. Gentleman. He is of course the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler), who sends out letters inviting people to claim his assistance.

Mr. Geoff Lawler (Bradford, North): That is a scurrilous slur on my integrity, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman would care to substantiate his remark. The only thing that I can possibly think that he is referring to is the practice which he claimed at the beginning of his speech he operates. When people come to me and say that they have a relative or friend wishing to visit this country, I insist on a letter from the sponsor saying that the sponsor can accommodate and sustain the visitor and give guarantees that the visitor will return home. On production of that evidence, I shall provide a note saying where I can be contacted should there be any problems.

Mr. Kaufman: I have seen a copy of the letter. [HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] That is a standard letter. It is a very generous, important and helpful letter. I applaud the hon. Gentleman for assisting his temporary constituents. However, that kind of letter is abuse No. 7 in the eyes of the Minister of State and was not referred to by the Minister of State.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman. I gave way to his hon. Friend, whom I was happy to name, and I will give way to any other hon. Member whom I name. I have no evidence that the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) goes out of his way to assist his constituents, and I have no material that I could use in that context.

Of the alleged abuses listed in the Minister of State's letter, some seem to be perfectly acceptable practices. Others, however, may arise from inefficiency, which is probably simply the consequence of the work load of hon. Members. In any case, such inefficiencies on the part of hon. Members are more than matched by inefficiency from the Home Office, with all its huge resources. For example, lately I have been subjected to numerous telephone calls demanding that I supply the Home Office with documents on a case which I sent to the Home Secretary weeks ago and which he seems to have lost. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman and the Minister of State need some of their own guidelines. The Opposition are perfectly ready to draw them up, as a public service.

The furore over the allegations by the Minister of State proceeded until, taking the wise advice of my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), endorsed by Mr. Speaker, the Government succumbed and provided a statement. That statement was made by the Home Secretary, offering the House its first taste of his technique of temperature lowering through obfuscation. That now overworked technique reached its nadir in his gallant but unavailing and unconvincing attempts on Monday to defend the indefensible in the shapes of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Attorney-General.

The Home Secretary in his statement abandoned for ever the word "abuse", which has disappeared into a lexicographical limbo never to return. That time, he employed his undoubted linguistic skills as an author of dramatic fiction to allege not abuse but misuse. In response to a plea by me, the right hon. Gentleman promised, encouragingly:

"The right hon. Gentleman . . . will get the names." — [*Official Report*, 29 October 1985; Vol. 84, c. 839.]

Indeed, he darkly hinted that 23 hon. Members were involved, the false implication being that they were all Labour Members.

That was just about the last we ever heard of the word "misuse" as well, and it was also the last of the McCarthyite allegation of a list of guilty people. The names have never been named because there are no names to name.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): If the right hon. Gentleman is going to purport to give a history of this matter, he had better get it right. He knows perfectly well that I wrote letters to the 23 hon. Members who I was suggesting were not operating in a correct manner. We duly reported back to the House the substance of the replies made by the 23 hon. Members which, with few exceptions, were to the effect that they had no intention of giving consent to their names being revealed.

Mr. Kaufman: The Minister did not say on the radio that he would seek permission. He simply said that he would name names, not on the radio but in the House of Commons. He has now backed down from that. It would have been an interesting list if it gave the names of the hon. Members whom the hon. and learned Gentleman included in the letters he sent. One of the hon. Members on the list was the Welsh nationalist Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley). I do not think that Caernarfon is an area of substantial Asian settlement but, nevertheless, the hon. Gentleman was one of the hon. Members whom the Minister said was abusing the position.

Mr. Waddington: In fairness to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), that hon. Gentleman takes a particularly keen interest, as most hon. Members will know, in Sri Lankan immigrants. That is why he takes up a very large number of cases with the Home Office.

Mr. Kaufman: I am glad, therefore, that the hon. and learned Gentleman has now said that an hon. Member who was on his list of 23 guilty men takes an honourable and proper interest in people from Sri Lanka who wish to come to this country. *[Interruption.]* I say people from Sri Lanka. The Minister said immigrants. I shall come to that matter, because there is schizophrenia in the Government about the use of that term.

Mr. Faulds: The Minister of State tried, rather hamfistedly as usual, to defend himself. He seems to forget that he made generalised accusations that a number of us—orignally an unspecified number—were abusing the system. On that occasion, I made the offer that the hon. and learned Gentleman could publish any letters of mine concerning immigration cases, leaving out the names of the people concerned, that he wished to. It transpired that I was not among his 23 Members who had been accused. I am deeply disappointed that I was not among the 23. This shows how totally tendentious and misleading that original unjustified accusation was.

Mr. Kaufman: I was not among the 23 either, and I was bitterly hurt. I was grateful that, by that time, I had been successfully reselected, so that that omission could not damage me.

Ms. Clare Short: The Minister could have selected various hon. Members from both sides of the House, but it was he who compiled the list of 23. I do not think that even he would claim that it was an exhaustive list and that every hon. Member on it had done one of the six things mentioned in the letter.

Mr. Kaufman: I agree. As we now know from the intervention by the Minister of State this afternoon, the hon. and learned Gentleman has nothing but admiration for the hon. Member for Caernarfon who, presumably, was one of the Members on the list.

The Minister of State came to speak in the House on this matter again in response to a debate on the Consolidated Fund Bill on 18 December initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). By then, the hon. and learned Gentleman was in a mood that was much more amenable, I might almost say chastened. He was soothing, almost Hurd-like. He said:

"I do not believe that it would be sensible to dwell too long on what has been happening up to now and to debate whether particular practices have been very bad, not so bad or all right . . . . Surely the point is to discuss the arrangements for the future." —[*Official Report*, 18 December 1985, Vol. 89, c. 506.]

The Home Secretary then proceeded to publish last month what was described as guidance on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases. In accordance with the wishes of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I then entered into discussion on this document in the company of my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs), first with the Home Secretary and then with the Home Secretary and the Minister of State. We stated our strong disagreement with a substantial part of the original document, both on constitutional grounds and in terms of practicability. Our arguments seemed to carry some weight because, when a new document was published last week—this time described as guidelines—major improvements had been made.

In the first document it had been proposed that Members of Parliament wanting a stop imposed on removal of a visitor or other person in hazard should contact not, as has been customary and acceptable until now, the Minister's office or, outside office hours, the duty officer, but the chief immigration officer at the appropriate port of entry. Quite apart from the serious practical difficulties involved, the Opposition regarded this as contitutionally unacceptable. We viewed as of paramount importance our right of direct access to the Minister, either personally or through his acknowledged personal representative. I am glad to say that that proposal has now been withdrawn.

An attempt was made in the first draft to deny temporary admission to an intending traveller if he or she had been advised directly that a Member of Parliament would seek to obtain temporary admission for him or her. That would have penalised someone for having taken advice from a Member of Parliament and was again constitutionally unacceptable. Following our opposition, that proposal, too, has been withdrawn.

An attempt was made to confine stop rights soiely to the relevant constituency Member. That proposal, too, has been partly abandoned, although the new proposals are still exceptionally unsatisfactory to us. Time scales for written representations at various stages of the process were laid down. All were very brief. Some have been expanded, but they still remain unsatisfactory.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: No, not at this stage.

The new document which we are considering today remains a document that could seriously prejudice the rights of hon. Members to protect constituents and their relatives and friends. It operates from a curious assumption implied in paragraph 2, that decisions about whether persons should be admitted to this country statutorily repose in the immigration officer. That is not so. These new guidelines say that the statutory power to

admit is vested in the immigration officer, but the Immigration Act states that the statutory power shall be "exercised" by the immigration officer, and that is very different.

Indeed, that same paragraph of the guidelines immediately makes it clear that the Minister has the power to overturn the decision of the immigration officer. It is the Minister who in the end has the power, and it is important to establish that absolutely firmly.

We remain strongly opposed to the time limits laid down for representations. The 12 working days cited in paragraphs 3 and 15, although a slight increase on the original proposal, is still far too brief a period for contracts to be made between the Member and the affected persons, and for representations then to be made to the Minister. A Parliamentary recess, an illness on either side, a holiday or pressure of work on either side could prevent this time limit being observed and consequently jeopardise the rights of those who might have spent on air tickets what are for working people very large sums of money.

The four-day periods laid down in paragraphs 9 and 16 and the five-day period in paragraph 14 are still more absurd, scarcely allowing time for letters to be exchanged, let alone for any kind of sensible discussion and organisation of a case which could hope to pass the stringent new criteria for a ministerial change of mind.

We still object very strongly to the prohibition in paragraph 17 of a Member taking up a case in another Member's constituency without the agreement of the latter. Let me make it clear that no hon. Member in his or her right mind will gratuitously take on extra work in this field. Those who deal with large numbers of these cases in their constituencies, as I do, know that the work burden is as crushing as the necessity is great. It involves voluminous paperwork and, even more time-consuming and onerous, telephone calls at any time of the day or night on any of the seven days of the week.

What is to be the position of people who are unable to get assistance from hon. Members—I am afraid all of them Conservative Members—who have indicated that they will not take up such cases or whose public attitudes on these issues are such that constituents literally dare not approach them? Are those constituents to go unassisted? Such a position would be totally unacceptable, and we ask the Government to withdraw this condition, especially since it places Members of the House of Commons at a disadvantage compared with Members of the House of Lords, all of whom, according to paragraph 20 are permitted to regard the whole of this country as their constituency.

Ms. Clare Short: Yes. Outrageous.

Mr. Kaufman: After all, there are cases, including some which I have taken up, in which a Member of Parliament other than the constituency Member has won admission for a visitor or other person following the imposition of a stop. The Home Office has acknowledged that person's rights and implicitly acknowledged that those rights would have been forfeited if another Member had not stepped in. Are such people to lose their rights under the law because of an arbitrary ruling by the Home Office on a matter which is none of the business of the Home Office but is a matter for this House of Commons and for Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: As the former Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison), told the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service on 12 April 1980, when he held the position at present held by the hon. and learned Gentleman,

> "As you know, the tradition is that Members of Parliament stick to their own constituency cases. This, of course, is essentially an understanding between MPs. Certainly Ministers have no power to enforce, let alone police, the convention – heaven forbid that they should!"

I very much hope that the Government will take to heart what was said by the previous Minister of State on this matter and that this prohibition will be abandoned.

It is also unacceptable that in the narrow range of permitted cases where a Member of Parliament is allowed, under these guidelines, to take up a non-constituency case, the Home Office will in future send a copy of the reply to the constituency Member of Parliament. Such material is often personal and intimate, shared with the assisting Member of Parliament only as part of the process of that assistance. It would be unacceptable for such confidential and private material to be passed on to another person without the agreement of the affected individual. Already, those affected by the immigration rules have to put up with too much personal humiliation. This stipulation must be dropped.

We remain highly unhappy about paragraph 19, which lays down that temporary admission will not readily be granted to passengers "most unlikely" to be admitted. We are dealing here, I suppose, with people who may have applied for permanent settlement and been turned down, whose cases are under appeal from overseas, or who are awaiting an interview after an application for settlement.

We all know that the Home Office has a paranoid fear that such people may enter the country as visitors and then, in the felicitous phrase of the Minister of State, go to ground. But are such persons to be denied the right to visit this country, to spend a little time with their spouses or intended spouses, their children or grandchildren, to attend a family wedding or funeral? Much greater flexibility is required here, so once again we are looking for a relaxation of the guidelines.

Paragraph 12 is curious and dangerous. It places great weight upon recommendations made by the appellate authorities. But some adjudicators, as a matter of practice, do not make recommendations. Are people affected by their decisions to be disadvantaged by a personal idiosyncrasy? In my own personal experience of cases, some fairly recent, even if an adjudicator does make a recommendation, perhaps on compassionate grounds, the Minister is quite likely to disregard it. So, is absence of a recommendation to be a barrier even though a favourable recommendation is not necessarily a protection? This condition too must be changed.

So we are looking for major alterations in this new document and we expect the Minister of State, when he winds up the debate, to promise such changes. But, above all, we ask why such a document is needed at all. The present system has worked quite satisfactorily, even though we acknowledge that it is a considerable burden on the Home Office, just as it is to those of us who have to resort to it. But it is a necessary system. After all, decisions by immigration officers are not reached on the basis of a set of scientific criteria; they are in the end,

[Mr. Kaufman]

however intensive the questioning, reached on the basis of hunch, and that hunch is liable to be faulty. The evidence for that judgment is the number of times that the immigration officer's original decision not to admit is overturned by the Minister when he has considered the case after a stop imposed following a Member of Parliament's intervention. That experience alone is justification for the stop system. That stop system is needed because facilities at the ports of entry, and particularly at Heathrow, are so inadequate as often to militate against fair treatment for those seeking entry.

Six months ago I was involved in a case whose details were so disquieting that I wrote to the Prime Minister herself about it. It related to a woman constituent of mine who had gone to Heathrow to meet her brother-in-law from Pakistan. Complicated details related to this visitor, which it was anticipated might militate against his admission. I passed on these details to the Home Secretary well in advance so that he could make the immigration officers at Heathrow aware of them. It was the previous Home Secretary, not the right hon. Gentleman. The Home Office did no such thing, so that when the visitor arrived he started from scratch. My constituent, who was in an advanced state of pregnancy, and was accompanied by two small children, was made to wait for 10 hours while the case was considered. Telephone calls too numerous to count took place between the Home Office and myself. I was in Yorkshire at the time attending a family celebration, which of course was completely disrupted by these events.

In the end temporary admission was agreed, but the visitor was not released to his relative for a further two hours after that decision, and it was achieved only after still more telephone calls from me. The immigration officers alleged that my constituent could not be found, but she had been sitting patiently for hours precisely where they had told her to sit. Having gone to London on Sunday morning to meet her brother-in-law, she did not get back to Manchester until six o'clock the next morning, having lost her night's sleep.

I asked the Prime Minister to investigate the case, and in her reply she said:

> "It is quite clear that there was a serious breakdown in communications, due to the volume of work and the intensity of pressure under which the whole staff at Terminal 3 were working at that time . . . there was an unfortunate and lengthy delay in contacting Mr. Mahmood's sponsors and implementing the decision to grant him temporary admission."

The Prime Minister offered her personal apologies to my constituents. Every hon. Member involved in such cases could provide a comparable example, but in too many cases these problems do not reach a Member of Parliament, let alone the Prime Minister. That is why the stop system is essential as a protection and a means of revealing incompetence and inadequacy.

Mr. Faulds: With reference to incompetence and with reluctance I should like to trump my right hon. Friend's story. I have a case which is now in the hands of the Home Office in which a chap who was refused entry was given back somebody else's passport on which he travelled to New Delhi, where he had to serve a term of imprisonment while the matter was sorted out.

Mr. Kaufman: That is one of the problems of the way in which these cases are dealt with. In too many cases things go wrong. I have made several complaints to the ombudsman, not about the policy, but about the administration of the policy. In his responses he has revealed serious inadequacies in the interpretation service, including faulty rotas, absences of those who should be present, and the allocation of interpreters whose language aptitudes are inappropriate to the person being interviewed.

This necessary stop system relates to unsatisfactory administrative arrangements, and to some immigration staff who, although predominantly courteous, are sometimes rude or offensive. Too often it seems to those on the receiving end that the objective is not to facilitate the right of entry laid down clearly in the immigration rules, but to find excuses for denying entry.

Let us be clear that in most cases we are talking not about those seeking to obtain settlement, but about those seeking entry as visitors. That is why the reference on the cover of the guidelines to "immigration cases" is inaccurate. Let us be clear also that we are talking about people who, according to the immigration rules, have a statutory right to enter, subject to certain conditions. On 29 October the Home Secretary referred to people

> "who do not qualify as visitors under the rules". [*Official Report*, 29 October 1985; Vol 84, c. 827.]

and the Minister of State talked about people who sought to come to this country at the invitation of Members of Parliament

> "knowing that they had no claim to entry."

But almost all the people involved have a claim to entry because the immigration rules give them a right to enter as visitors. The problem is that that claim to entry is too often obstructed or denied by immigration officers carrying out the policy of the Minister. In the end, despite the inadequate, humiliating or offensive treatment of too many of those who arrive at the ports of entry, it is the policy that is wrong.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Kaufman: I shall not give way, as I have spoken for a long time, and am coming to the end of my speech.

The policy is based on suspicion, prejudice and paranoia. That is why we need, not obstructive guidelines, but a change of attitude and, above all, of policy. Many of the Minister's problems could be avoided if he were to change that policy. By that, I do not mean an abandonment of immigration control. Primary immigration is in any case at an end, and a Labour Government will certainly maintain firm immigration control, but unlike this Government, it will be a non-racist, non-sexist, immigration control. Even more important, in the short term, as a priority act of administrative action, the moment we take office we shall ensure——

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: No chance.

Mr. Kaufman: The hon. Gentleman will never be here to see it. He will have to grow a bit before he wins another seat.

The moment we take office we shall ensure that Labour's firm but fair immigration control will be administered humanely and with the respect that is due to those who seek to enter. There will be no discrimination whatever between those who come from Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, and those from countries where travellers predominantly have white skins.

Because the position, which was revealed by the arguments that preceded the issue of these guidelines, is so objectionable, and because we continue to disagree with much of the content of the guidelines, we have sought this debate. We are using it to put before the country, not only our commitment to immigration control, but our absolute determination that such control shall be fair, decent, humane and, above all, non-racist, and non-sexist. Because we see none of those essential ingredients in the Government's approach and policies, we shall force a vote tonight.

4.46 pm

Sir Edward Gardner (Fylde): The control of the entry into the United Kingdom of people from abroad is a serious and growing problem. Nothing that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has said has done or could do anything to resolve it. I say that with regret, which is probably felt on both sides of the House. The right hon. Gentleman had the opportunity of making and, in his own words, has made, a long speech. He also had an opportunity to make recommendations which might have been of use and which we could have treated seriously, but he has chosen not to.

There are three questions that we must answer in considering the wisdom, or lack of it, in the guidelines. The first is why there has been this breathtaking increase in the number of representations on immigration cases by Members of Parliament. The increase has been breathtaking because in the three years preceding 1982 the average number of representations made was 1,000 a year. The following year the figure doubled. The year after that it trebled, and in 1985 the increase was sixfold—61 per cent. up on the previous year.

There are undoubtedly various speculative reasons why that should have happened. Obviously, one cannot attribute it to the increase in the number of Members of Parliament after the 1983 implementation of the Boundary Commission's recommendations, when there were 15 additions. That could not in any way be responsible. Nor can it be attributed to any change in the law relating to the entry of people as visitors because the Labour Government had to follow exactly the same law. There has been no change in the criteria that immigration officers apply.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): I should like to set the statistics in context. The hon. and learned Gentleman describes the whole thing as a problem. Is he aware that almost a million more people have left this country in the last 20 years than have come in? He mentioned the number of representations made by hon. Members about people who were refused entry, but has he compared the number of representations as a percentage of the number of refusals? If he does that he will find that his two, three and sixfold increases are totally wrong.

Sir Edward Gardner: The figures are before the House and can be considered. How they are interpreted is a matter for each hon. Member. I shall be surprised if any right hon. or hon. Member seeks to argue that this is not a problem of the deepest and greatest concern to all of us and to our people. It is properly described as a problem. I do not say that there should be any change in the way that the law is applied, or that the criteria used by the immigration officers should be altered to interfere with the right of access by hon. Members to the Secretary of State.

I disagree with the right hon. Member for Gorton about the recommendations in the first draft of the guidelines. He said that the draft is in some way unconstitutional and an attempt to deprive hon. Members of their right of access to the Secretary of State. It was recommended that before going to the Secretary of State an hon. Member should go directly to the port to make sure there was merit in his reference. The draft was intended not to destroy the right of access but to make sure that the right was exercised in proper cases.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall North): The hon. and learned Gentleman is the Chairman of the Select Committee on which I sit. Does he not agree that what he has said is inappropriate? In matters of housing, social security, pensions and taxation hon. Members do not act as judges. When constituents write to us or come to our surgeries we do not decide whether they are eligible for benefits, but take the matter up with officialdom. What is the difference between such cases as that and cases where people ask us to make representations about relatives or close friends who have been refused entry?

Sir Edward Gardner: First of all, these people are not constituents. I am not suggesting for one moment that the original guidelines should not have been amended in the way that they have been amended on consultation. I am submitting to the House that the right hon. Member for Gorton was wrong in intention and wrong in fact in his interpretation of the guidelines. One realises that some hon. Members would like the gates of Britain to be opened wider so that more people could come in with less difficulty. Other hon. Members would like to see the gates taken off the hinges so that there was no control of any kind. [AN HON. MEMBER: "Who?"] I hear speeches inside and outside the House and the strong impression one gets from them is exactly that which I have described to the House. No doubt speeches will be made today from which that inference could be strongly drawn.

Ms. Clare Short: By his allegations the hon. and learned Gentleman is muddling everything. We are talking about people who seek to visit our country, see their relatives and leave. We are talking about how we treat people who seek to visit our country, and not about immigration or settlement. It is important that senior hon. Members such as the hon. and learned Gentleman should not muddle the debate in this way.

Sir Edward Gardner: If the hon. Lady is muddled about my meaning, I am certainly not muddled about what I am saying and what I intend to say. I am talking about people who come here without entitlement to enter and who may not be given that entitlement. If they get in they will overstay the limit of time that we can tolerate.

Mr. Kaufman: It is important to clarify what the hon. and learned Gentleman says about whether or not people have a right to enter. The immigration rule about visitors says quite clearly:

> "A passenger seeking entry as a visitor, including one coming to stay with relatives or friends, is to be admitted"

The rule then sets out the conditions that have to be satisfied before a person is admitted. But it says that he "is to be admitted". Accordingly, he has a right of entry unless he fails to satisfy the conditions.

Sir Edward Gardner: This is the whole point: this is what we are talking about, and it is at the heart of the debate. The second question is about the effect of the

[Sir Edward Gardner]

increase in representations made by hon. Members about immigration cases. The first of those effects is a serious one that we must take into account. I hope that we all do. That increase diverts the energies and the concentration of immigration officers and results in appalling delays to the great majority of passengers who properly come to this country.

It is a matter of common sense that delays and a concentration of effort in the wrong places cost money, and it is ultimately the taxpayer who has to pay. As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary told the House, if the system is subjected to serious strains — as undoubtedly it is at present because of the increase in representations — it is in danger of being destroyed. Most speeches in the debate will be directed towards how the Government should deal with this problem. In cases where an application is made for a stop on a decision by an immigration officer, and where that application is by way of reference to the Secretary of State, I should like to see some means of distinguishing between cases which have merit and cases which have no merit.

Mr. John Whitfield (Dewsbury): My hon. and learned Friend's point is apposite to the debate. How on earth can any such distinction be made—and such a distinction ought to be made—if hon. Members are not required to speak to the immigration officer at the port of entry?

Sir Edward Gardner: I take that point. It is one for which I have a great deal of sympathy. Other hon. Members might also feel sympathy for it. Because of my great anxiety I have looked very carefully at the guidelines. The last thing that one wants to do is to give the impression to anyone, in this House, in this country or abroad, that we are in any way offending against this country's reputation, for fairness in matters of this kind. I recommend the guidelines to the House as being reasonable, sensible and well balanced. If they are followed, as one hopes they will be, we shall be able to increase the efficiency of the system and cut down the delays.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Sir Edward Gardner: No.

They will be a means of preserving the reputation of this nation for fairness.

5 pm

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): It is fairly well known that there is a considerable number of people from the Indian sub-continent in my constituency. The Home Office and the Minister of State, the hon. and learned Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington), know that I deal with a large number of cases on a day-to-day basis, including Sundays, and sometimes Christmas day and Boxing day, that involve hold-ups at Heathrow airport. Therefore I have considerable experience of this matter. It may come as a surprise to some hon. Members that I did not receive a letter of admonishment from the Minister of State. I have had my leg pulled about that; some of my hon. Friends suggested that I must be slipping.

When I deal with cases that involve another constituency I am always most careful to ensure that a link of some kind can be found with my constituency. Hon. Members who represent other constituencies may not always be as readily available as I, or my wife, may be. My home is near Heathrow airport and my constituency is also close to that airport. There are occasions, therefore, when people in Birmingham, Glasgow, Gravesend or elsewhere, including the adjacent constituency of Hayes and Harlington, do not get the immediate response that is needed when a passenger is required to return to his country of origin in a matter of two or three days.

A passenger is sometimes detained because of an hon. Member's intervention. Then he has to await the heavily weighted decision of the Minister of State, Home Office. If the Minister of State wishes to ease the burden on the Home Office, he ought to consider introducing a more realistic period of consultation with hon. Members who are snowed under with these cases. It might then be possible to lighten the burdens of the whole system, including those of hon. Members and the Home Office. I invite the Home Secretary to consider that point.

I have already suggested that one means of lightening the burden would be to consider the reasons given by immigration control for the refusal of leave to enter this country. We should comb through those cases with meticulous care to find out how frequently flimsy grounds for refusal of leave to enter this country have been given. Sometimes it is said that the hosts or the incoming passengers have lied, because a discrepancy has been discovered between the amount of time for which passengers have asked for leave to visit this country and the amount of time for which hosts have asked to welcome their relatives. Although the Home Secretary is not in his place, I hope that when he reads *Hansard* he will pay some regard to my remarks.

The occasions are rare upon which incoming passengers or their hosts set out to circumvent immigration control. There are such occasions, of course, but during the many years that I have been Member of Parliament for Ealing, Southall, few people who have entered the United Kingdom as visitors have absconded and gone adrift. There may have been two or three such cases during the 20 years that I have been a Member of this House. Visitors to this country would be miracle men if they could understand our immigration laws and rules. Very few of the indigenous people understand all their ramifications.

I hope that the public will understand that in this debate we are not discussing basic immigration: or large numbers of people arriving at Heathrow airport and other airports who hope to settle illegally in Britain by means of subterfuge.

I am grateful for the continuous courtesy and co-operation of the immigration staff in the Minister's office. They are not responsible for the system or for policy. The Government are responsible for the system and for the harshness, in many cases, of the way in which visitors from abroad, particularly from the Indian sub-continent, are treated. In some cases they travel with a letter from, perhaps, auntie who says, "When you arrive I want to introduce you to a nice girl who is a British passport holder." But that is what makes the world go round. Young men from this country have gone to the four corners of the world looking for and finding brides. Those who go abroad on holiday sometimes accomplish the same task. That should not be held against visitors to this country. Furthermore, the host community knows that a limit is placed upon the length of these visits. They fill in forms as sponsors.

Unlike the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler) I do not send out circular letters. I notice that he is shaking his head. I understand that he gives a great deal of assistance to the immigrant community in Bradford, North and he is to be commended for doing so. However, although people queue up at my surgery to express apprehension about the way in which their relatives will be treated when they arrive at Heathrow airport, their apprehension sometimes proves to have been unnecessary because I hear little about it afterwards. I assume, therefore, that the visitors enter this country without too much difficulty and that as they motor away from Heathrow airport they can see that brilliant sign which says "Welcome to Britain".

However, some visitors are not so welcome to Britain. In those cases, I say that if there is time they should write to me. If there is time, I respond in writing and set out the duties of immigration control. I tell them that, if all the details that they have given me are the absolute truth, there should be no difficulty about granting admittance for a legitimate visit.

The importance of people being granted what I call a legitimate visit rather than temporary admission, which hon. Members achieve as a result of our intervention, is that, if they are granted temporary admission, a mark is put in their passport. This means that, if they want to visit another European country, they will not be granted a visa. Furthermore, they will not be granted a visa to visit Canada if they have relatives in that country.

I could make a long speech, but I do not intend to do so. However, I wish to make one or two points which may help the Minister of State and the control system. I have already pleaded for a meticulous look at the reasons given for refusal. They will eventually be given by Ministers to Members of Parliament who intervene.

When I encountered the Minister in the Lobby he would say that he was fed up writing "Dear Sydney", so I suggested a compromise whereby I would write "Dear D." and he would write "Dear S", as that might relieve the tension on his wrist.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes) *rose*——

Mr. Bidwell: I would like to get this off my chest; I will give way later.

I understand from a former Minister of State that the present Minister of State, Home Office, is probably the most overworked and overburdened Minister in the Government. I defy him to say that he can consider, with meticulous care, the mounting number of cases which we are bringing before him. That validates the plea made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) when he presented to the House, without opposition, a Bill to provide for an appeal system before the departure of the passenger.

It worries me that it is possible for a passenger stuck in Harmondsworth or another detention centre to be there for up to three weeks. There is one passenger who is presently detained about whom I am most anxious. I am told that a reply is pending, as the draft is before the Minister of State. I am depressed because I have to talk to the relatives of that person and try to justify the fact that someone can be stuck in such a detention centre for three weeks or more before the ultimate decision comes into force.

It is rare for the Minister to overturn the immigration control attitudes. I suggest to the Minister and his officials who are listening to this debate that there is a great deal of leeway within the present system and that those responsible for immigration control should be encouraged to reconsider whether they have a solid case, which would be upheld by public opinion, for refusing passengers admission. It is not a question of discrepancies which may sometimes arise because a travel agent has advised a passenger to tell certain lies on arriving at the port. We could do a good deal to lighten the Minister's burden, and it would lighten mine as well. I would be delighted if that was the case.

I have intervened in other cases. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has pointed out, we are reluctant to canvass cases in other Member's constituencies. However, sometimes the constituency Member, for various reasons—I am not calling them racist, although there is one particular case who would take that label—has been embroiled in long-standing immigration cases. Community relations officers—I will not name the places but I would name them later if necessary—will inevitably approach friends in other constituencies if they are dealing with a temporary admission.

Immigration officers often advise hosts and friends when a passenger has entered a two-day temporary admission. If the Member intervenes, the admission may be extended to a couple of months or more. The passenger will be invited to appeal if he is refused leave to enter but he may not do so, often because of expense. Therefore, he does not achieve the stay for which he asked. That has its own logic. The visitors do not run away. That is very rare; in my long experience, there have been perhaps two or three cases. They do not abscond, as the Minister calls it.

Mr. Hanley: Few hon. Members are treated with such universal respect in this matter as the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Bidwell). I ask for one word of advice. When the hon. Gentleman meets constituents who are anxious about whether their friends or relatives will be allowed into the country as visitors, does he ever advise them to seek voluntary entry clearance in the home country before they depart?

Mr. Bidwell: I was considering that before I started my speech today. However, there are difficulties. I have asked the Minister's office for advice. Why do we not introduce a universal entry certificate requirment? Why do we not ask for visas? I am not pleading for such a system. Our relationship with Indian sub-continent, the to-ing and fro-ing of business men, makes it difficult. Let us consider visits.

The founders of the Southall community were those who left Jullundur to avoid being cheap labour. From the inception of that community in Southall we fought to get them trade union rights. The constituency of the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) is not far from mine. He has visited my constituency on occasion in tragic circumstances. I value his visits, as they show a non-party approach to problems. I have always made a non-party approach to solving the problem of immigration, and in that sense the hon. Gentleman's remarks about my attitudes being acceptable across the House are correct. I have never regarded immigration as a matter that we

(Mr. Bidwell)

should thrust into a party political collision. The non-party approach is necessary in the struggle for racial harmony, but I shall justify it another time.

We are not discussing the broader issues of immigration. Practicalities do not promote the idea that one should be able to obtain an entry certificate. If people flew from Jullundur or came overnight to Delhi they might spend two or three days in Delhi. The delay in Delhi is due to lack of staff to deal with entry to Britain. This could be avoided by a great extension of the staff in Delhi or Bombay, but the Home Office is not willing to promote that. If the Home Office were to insist on an entry certificate, there would have to be a considerable increase in staff to cut the abominable delays. It must also increase the staff in the pocket areas of migration in the Indian sub-continent — Bangladesh, Sylhet, Assam, Bombay, Islamabad, Jullundur, Amritsar, Delhi—those pockets of migration which affect Bradford and my constituency.

Visitors may be asked to obtain an entry certificate, but one realises how difficult that may be. People may make the long journey to Delhi and then be refused. I have seen such problems for myself when I have visited India over a number of years.

People have sought asylum because of the difficulties in the Sikh community, the recent attack on the Golden Temple and the assassination of the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi. Presumably the guidelines do not apply to Member's representations in respect of asylum seekers. Such applications are automatically referred to the Home Office by the immigration services. However, I should like this clarified when the Minister replies.

Because of subsequent reactions to the guidelines, the Home Secretary has back-pedalled on the substance of Members' rights. I thought he would do so, because he must understand that Members are jealous of their rights. I asked about this matter years ago, when I first came to the House. I asked about taking up the grievances and problems which affected other constituencies. I was given a ruling—not a fundamental ruling—that it was a matter of convention and courtesy. It is difficult to follow these courtesies; one often does not have the time to do so, and it must be a belated action.

One certainly does not wish to jump in and deal with matters in neighbouring constituencies. We know that some Tories have an abominable attitude and will not help Asian people as they would help non-Asian people. I think that it is valid to mention that the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) has even dared to complain about my taking up cases affecting his constituency. The Asian people concerned, however, who have friends a stone's throw over the border between the hon. Gentleman's constituency and mine, say that it is useless approaching him because he has made it clear publicly that he will not touch them with a barge pole. That being so, the only way for them to achieve the second look at that matter afforded by the present system is by coming to the Member in whose constituency they have friends and relatives.

Mr. John Carlisle: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I must protest strongly on behalf of my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), who clearly had no warning of the allegations that have been made. The hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Bidwell) should withdraw those comments unless he has already cleared the matter with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): This is a matter for debate, but if an hon. Member intends to refer to another hon. Member, it is customary for him to give notice to that Member.

Mr. Bidwell: Given the overspill of Asian people into Hayes and Harlington, it is difficult for me to explain the circumstances in which I am placed. The hon. Gentleman is the architect of his own misfortune. He told me that he was complaining to the Minister about my intervention, and I want the whole world to know that. I retain a friendly attitude to him if I can, so I told him that he must be suffering from a death wish because with that attitude to a substantial proportion of his constituents he could not hope to survive the next election.

Mr. Tim Brinton (Gravesham): The hon. Gentleman has also alluded to my constituency. He recently had a meeting with my community relations council which led to publicity in the local paper to the effect that he was prepared to take on cases in which I refused to intervene. I am perfectly convinced that the hon. Gentleman is good-hearted in his approach, but he has also said that in his view this privilege for Members should be decided by Members themselves. Will he tell the House whether he has ever refused to intervene in a case brought to him and, if so, what would be the reasons for such a refusal? I shall then better understand his approach to the problem.

Mr. Bidwell: I have frequently refused, when I did not think that the case was powerful enough. For instance, when a person has been told to leave at a particular time, there may be special pleading from the Gravesend community relations council. The essence of the matter is that if a Member of Parliament, even one who I understand is not contesting the next election — [HON. MEMBERS: "What has that to do with it?"] It has a lot to do with it. If a Member of Parliament is held to be failing his constituents in some way it is perfectly valid for them to go to another Member of Parliament who is willing to take the matter up.

In conclusion, I re-emphasise my plea to the Minister to ease the burdens that neither of us wants by looking more carefully at the reasons advanced, especially with regard to visits. Much of the difficulty would then vanish. Better still, he should examine the feasibility of the proposals by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West for an appeal system. That suggestion is validated by the proposals made when the Immigration Act 1971, which I opposed, was being put together. If the Minister took that proposal on board, he could get on with his other duties and pay more attention to fighting the crime wave instead of being involved in the detail of these cases.

5.24 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): First, I pay a warm tribute to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State for the admirable way in which he and his staff deal with representations made by hon. Members. There can be little doubt that he has one of the most exacting jobs in the Government and that he does it with distinction. He is always fair, courteous and accessible, he takes enormous trouble to consider every case and he is ready to look again when Members ask him to do so. Perhaps it has been the

efficient way in which my hon. and learned Friend and his predecessors of both political parties have dealt with these matters which has led over the years to the gradual increase in representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases. The immigrants themselves, the visitors to this country, their representatives and organisations in this country know about the procedure and that in itself may generate more inquiries of hon. Members and thus more representation. It may also be due to the way in which Members themselves deal so assiduously with the cases that they raise.

I thought that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) was perhaps rather ungenerous in his remarks today. He said that I did not go out of my way to assist my constituents. I hope that on reflection he will withdraw that statement. I regularly assist my constituents, as do nearly all hon. Members I know who represent constituencies surrounding Heathrow, one of whom is the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Bidwell).

Ms. Clare Short: I think that my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who is no longer present, was intending to make a witty remark. He had no evidence, such as copies of letters, to suggest that the hon. Gentleman went out of his way to assist constituents, but there was no suggestion that the hon. Gentleman did not give adequate service to his constituents.

Mr. Shersby: That kind of humour is lost on me. If the right hon. Gentleman chooses to employ it and then to be absent when I reply to it, he has only himself to blame.

Mr. Bidwell: I acknowledge the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) as my Member for Parliament, as I live in his constituency. No occasion has ever been mentioned to me—had there been such an occasion, I am sure that it would have been mentioned to me—on which the hon. Gentleman has not been most helpful to those who come to see him.

Mr. Shersby: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Shersby: I will not give way again, as I wish to get on.

I thought that the right hon. Member for Gorton made a wily, carping speech designed to curry favour with the ethnic minority communities. He quoted various cases, one of which he had raised with the Prime Minister, to justify a major attack on the rules, but he said nothing about the thousands of visitors who come in without difficulty or the many cases in which, following the intervention of Members of Parliament, the people concerned are admitted swiftly and courteously and made welcome to our country. I believe that the right hon. Gentleman's speech will upset and disturb many immigration officers who are my constituents.

An important aspect of today's debate is the substantial increase in the number of cases raised by Members of Parliament. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary spoke of a 61 per cent. increase since 1984. That must be a matter of concern to the Home Office. It is also a matter of concern to me and to other Members representing constituencies around Heathrow and other ports of entry because it entails the diversion of officers from their work at the control points and slows down clearance of the majority of passengers who are eligible for admission.

Each time I return to Heathrow I look carefully at the queues of passengers and spend a few minutes seeing how long it takes to get through the barriers. I compare my experience at Heathrow with my experience overseas. In general people trying to visit this country can enter swiftly and without undue difficulty. When I compare Heathrow with some overseas airports, I think we are very fortunate. I pay tribute to the officers who act fairly and courteously and who at all times attempt to help people, whatever the hour of the day or night. I am sure I speak for the whole House when I say that we want visitors at Heathrow to enter the country quickly and courteously.

Because of the tremendous pressure being exerted on the Home Office, it is right that the House should be asked to review the procedures. While hon. Members wish to retain their undoubted right to make representations to the Minister of State, surely there must be a sensible balance between that right and the need to maintain efficient and effective immigration control. That control has to be exercised in accordance with the Immigration Act 1971, an Act supported by most people in Britain. I want to see it continue to work well.

Cases which last for many months and in which a visitor is not removed within two months of arrival result in the eventual cost of removal being passed to the taxpayer. That does not help to maintain good community relations. I am concerned that a system which has generally worked well, as several hon. Members have said, is at risk. If the House does not take account of the serious strain on the Home Office the system will become unworkable.

What would be the alternative if we did not have the system of representation by Members of Parliament and the stop facility? The only alternative would be that immigrants refused entry would have to be removed, as the original Act intended. Many hon. Members with large immigrant communities will agree that such a change would not be welcomed either by the House or by their constituents. Therefore, I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has given thought to the new guidelines setting out the practice to be followed by hon. Members in normal immigration cases. I for one welcome the consultation which my hon. and learned Friend has undertaken and the willingness he has displayed at all times to make changes in the original guidelines as published following the consultations.

I also welcome my hon. and learned Friend's understanding of the fact that a requirement to the port of entry would place a great and unacceptable burden on an hon. Member. Swift access to the private office of my hon. and learned Friend is essential if we are to do our job as hon. Members. I am also glad that my hon. and learned Friend recognises that in many cases hon. Members would still feel obliged to put a stop notice on removal, whatever facts were presented by the immigration officer. It is right that the requirement to refer cases to the ports has been omitted from the new guidelines.

I want to comment on several important aspects of the revised guidelines. I welcome the definition of the role of hon. Members. That is most useful and I hope my hon. and learned Friend will draw it to the attention of new Members of the House when they are elected. Casting my mind back some 13½ years, I cannot recall receiving any guidelines from the Home Secretary of the day in 1972 as

[Mr. Shersby]

to how I should deal with immigration matters in Uxbridge. I was left to find out by experience, as most hon. Members are. Fortunately, I was able to draw on extensive local government experience. Without that, I might have been in difficulty. I hope my hon. and learned Friend will ensure that when new Members enter the House they will automatically receive the guidelines.

It is right that only the constituency Member should take up a case unless, because of illness or absence, another hon. Member has been requested to deal with his or her constituency business. I am pleased that the guidelines state that hon. Members with a special interest in the problems of a particular national group who wish to raise an immigration case must first consult the constituency Member concerned. If we depart from the long-standing and established convention of the House we shall only get into difficulty. The convention which exists commends itself to most hon. Members. The constituency Member has the absolute right to act for his constituents and that right should never be abused by another hon. Member who claims a special interest in a national group.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): Does the House realise that if we pass the rules tonight, as I hope we shall——

Ms. Clare Short: We are not voting on the rules but on the Adjournment.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: Whether or not there is a vote on the Adjournment, there is virtual acceptance by the House of the guidelines. Does my hon. Friend realise that the convention, which we ought to keep, will become rather more than a convention, because it will be laid down in the guidelines and, therefore, will apply?

Mr. Shersby: I take the point that my hon. Friend has raised. I think the guidelines make it clear that it is a convention. The guidelines, which are not rules, emphasise the convention which we all understand.

I also welcome the emphasis that is placed on the fact that temporary admission of a visitor is not a grant of leave to enter, but an alternative to detention. If that point could be made more widely known, it would be of advantage to all concerned. In fairness to visitors and to our constituents, it must be clearly understood that those who become engaged or who marry while on temporary admission are ineligible to stay on the basis of that engagement or marriage. I am sure the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall will agree that many of the problems we have to deal with involve people who become engaged or who marry while in the United Kingdom on temporary admission and who expect to stay here.

There are enormous problems when an hon. Member who wishes to help, very often a young couple, has to tell them what the position is. It is vital for would-be immigrants to know that the immigration rules require them to get entry clearance from abroad. It would be much easier if that were done. The hon. Member for Ealing, Southall made the point that there are not sufficient staff in our embassies and high commissions abroad to make that possible. My hon. and learned Friend might like to comment on that when he is replying to the debate.

During consultation on the guidelines there has been discussion about the fact that they will prevent hon. Members from intimating to relatives that, should a passenger get into difficulty, he or she may seek the advice of a Member of Parliament. I am sure that that was never intended. As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made clear in his speech, the intention was to point to the undesirability of the practice of inviting people to come to this country to seek entry, knowing that they had no entitlement to come. I wonder how often that has happened. New Members of Parliament should be advised on that point and they should realise that if they provide letters giving the impression that people have an entitlement to come here, they will create great difficulties.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): How is an hon. Member in any party to know whether someone from overseas, whether from Bangladesh or the United States, has a right to come here as a visitor, which is what we are talking about?

Mr. Shersby: I do not think it is for an hon. Member to make that judgment; it is for the officer at the port of entry to make the judgment. If hon. Members take it upon themselves to give such advice they may get into difficulty. I very much welcome paragraph 19 of the guidelines, which makes it clear that if that happens, temporary admission will not be granted readily. That is quite clear, and we all know where we stand. I welcome that guideline and hope that it will be supported throughout the House.

I am also glad that my hon. and learned Friend has extended the deadline for written representations from 10 to 12 working days. This change will be welcomed by all hon. Members. The right hon. Member for Gorton mentioned the real problems involved in contacting hon. Members at weekends. We all have other obligations at weekends, not only to our constituents but to our families, and it is not always easy to contact us. I wonder whether my hon. and learned Friend would be willing to consider the possibility of allowing several clear working days to elapse, so that a visitor wishing to make representations to an hon. Member would be able to do so during a working day rather than at a weekend.

Even if they are not perfect, the revised guidelines are firm and pretty fair. I hope that all hon. Members will help to make them work. If they work, we shall all be better able to serve the interests of our constituents and of those who wish to visit our country.

5.42 pm

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): I should like first to associate myself with the comments made about the helpfulness of the Minister's private office in these matters. I, too, have found it to be unfailingly helpful. I genuinely sympathise with the Minister of State. His job must be one of the most unpleasant tasks in the Government, and I do not believe that it is lightly carried out. The problems are problems of principle, concerning our attitude towards immigration and towards minorities, rather than of implementation by the Minister.

I accept that there are a few who wish to circumvent the rules by coming here as visitors. However, the evidence available to me and my colleagues suggests that such people form a tiny proportion of the total and that the communities themselves are aware of the damage done to their general case if people seek to circumvent the rules.

Such incidents are indicative of the desperate circumstances that people face in other countries, but that is another matter.

A Government's political attitude must influence administrative actions. If a Government support right and principled attitudes by guidelines and the force of law, that will without a doubt influence the actions of immigration and entry clearance officers. I do not doubt that the Government's general attitude towards immigration is unsympathetic and that that transmits itself to the officials who have to implement the policy.

We all have stories about how people are affected in practice. One story was told to me by a white constituent who was, I suspect, not generally sympathetic to the idea of people from ethnic groups coming to this country. He told me that he had returned from a trip to Amsterdam on a plane carrying a large group of white people who were openly talking about the drugs that they had used in Amsterdam and had brought back with them. Apparently, they were smoking pot on the plane. At Heathrow all those people went straight through the immigration controls. The one Asian couple on the plane, however, were immediately stopped by immigration and subjected to the procedure. Such incidents have a bad influence on people in our own communities, and show that there is some discrimination in the way in which we treat people.

We need to work on our individual cases within the Government's overall philosophy. Although I want to replace the Government as soon as possible by people of a different philosophy, I should attempt to do as well as I can for my constituents within the rules. Hon. Members gain nothing by acting irresponsibly on these cases. We must build up an acceptance of the impartiality and responsibility of individual hon. Members, whatever our individual opinions may be on Government policy.

It is not always easy to tell the communities that one represents——

Mr. Corbyn: I think that I heard the hon. Gentleman say that he did not condone hon. Members acting irresponsibly on immigration matters. So far as I know, the only person who has claimed that hon. Members act irresponsibly is the Minister of State. Are we to understand that the Liberal spokesman agrees with the remarks made by the Minister of State when he started this ridiculous charade?

Mr. Meadowcroft: That is not a helpful intervention. What I was referring to was the macho symbolism of some hon. Members who are delighted to appear on the list of 23 and who believe that that has helped them to gain reselection. But that attitude is not helpful to the cases that they are trying to represent.

Sometimes we have to try to tell people in our own communities that there are reason why a certain person should not be admitted. I remember the Minister of State telling me categorically that the person concerned in a certain case was involved—at a time of high stress—with the Khalistan movement. I had to tell the Sikh representatives in Leeds that, as far as I was aware—the Minister had given me his word—that person was so involved and his admission as a visitor would not be helpful at that moment. The community accepted that because in other—admittedly rare—cases we had been able to achieve a change in the Minister's policy. Such a relationship will be difficult to build up under the rules put before us today.

Essentially, the system that we are trying to operate cannot cope with the numbers of people involved, and we are therefore faced with the problem of putting bureaucratic regulations in place of a real policy. It is not only immigration officers who are taken off other work. Hon. Members who would dearly love to be able to make progress with other work find themselves diverted towards urgent and complicated cases involving people stopped at the point of entry and appeals from relatives or friends to the hon. Member for ways and means of securing entry. All too often, prima facie, the person should never have been stopped.

We are dealing with ordinary people from ordinary families who are trying to come here for a visit and are stopped at the point of entry on a technicality. They, and I, are baffled as to why that happens. I am distressed by the impression that is given to many ordinary families in this country, especially in the Asian community, by the type of bureaucracy that is encountered on entry to this country.

The Minister of State should openly recognise the fact that temporary admission is another category of immigration or entry. It is used by the Minister as much as by hon. Members as a way of securing entry, in effect on bail, and as a way of retaining people's passports. That is the crucial point. If someone is given leave to enter, there is no way in which his passport should be retained.

Mr. Madden: It would be unfortunate if the hon. Gentleman were to mislead our constituents by seeking to give the impression that it is lawful to retain the passports of those on temporary admission. The Minister of State and his officials have, on a number of occasions, assured hon. Members that if passports are requested they will be immediately returned.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I am well aware of that, but the corollary is that if one insists that the passport is returned, that is an encouragement to the Minister to say that there are no grounds for allowing the person to enter. If one insists, it is easier to say no than to allow them to retain the passport, in which case they may say yes. If one is endeavouring to secure permission for someone to stay in this country for a relatively short period, one has to accept —whether or not it is legal—that the passport will be retained. That is yet another guarantee for the Home Office. I do not say that that is right; I say that it is what happens.

Mr. Madden *rose*——

Mr. Meadowcroft: One of the problems faced by the Minister—it is a problem that he should take far more clearly on board—is that of the clash of cultures as it affects what is said by people coming into this country when they are interviewed separately. In many of the cases that we face, hon. Members have to explain what is meant by what people say when they come in.

Let me give three examples. Recently, a visitor to one of my constituents had a letter from her sponsor advising what to say and what not to say in particular circumstances. As far as I could make out, there was no suggestion that the sponsor was advising the visitor to tell untruths or misrepresent the facts. The letter simply explained what it was beneficial to emphasise in order to cope with the particular inquiries that would be made. That was held to be a reason why the visitor should not be

[Mr. Meadowcroft]

admitted. That is ridiculous. The visitor was euphemistically described as somebody of modest background. In other words, she was somebody who would find it difficult to communicate in a bureaucratic situation. The sponsor was only being helpful, but that boomeranged. That was the result of a clash of cultures and what happened was unforgivable.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that if only we could get people to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth most of our problems at the airports would disappear?

Mr. Meadowcroft: I wish that that were the case, but I have examples of people telling the truth, particularly when a question was put in a negative way, when often the response from a person who comes from India or Pakistan——

Mr. Corbyn: There are racist immigration officers.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: When accusations of racism are made from a sedentary position, that is a disgraceful abuse.

Mr. Meadowcroft: people are sometimes asked questions in a way that causes them to respond in a way that does not help their case, even if they are telling the truth. Sometimes the problem stems purely from a clash of cultures.

A man whose sponsor was his brother was asked by an immigration officer if his brother wrote to him. He replied that he wrote to him once a month. The brother, his sponsor, was asked whether he wrote to his brother, and he said that he did not. The letters were going to the head of the family in India—the mother—who passed the letters on to the other members of the family. Both men told the truth, but the visitor's answer was detrimental to his chance of being admitted.

An older Muslim woman is often, sadly, regarded as being in a somewhat shameful position if she is not married. Long delays in the cases of fiancés and husbands entering Britain are detrimental to the woman's standing in the community. Sometimes cases are not dealt with in rotation and a person can be a figure of fun in the community because other partners have come in who may have applied later.

Members of Parliament are not being approached by excessive numbers of people. It appears to be one in five. Sometimes, because of the problems, hon. Members are asked to provide letters in advance. In effect, they are testimonials of the sponsors in Britain which can be taken to the airport to show that they are people of standing in case there are problems. Sometimes I resent the extra work load which often proves to be unnecessary because people's fears are unrealised. We should not have to go to extra trouble simply because people are fearful that they will not be treated fairly when they enter the country.

The new guidelines are better than the old, but they are not satisfactory. They are wrong in principle because they seek to instruct and to limit hon. Members in the carrying out of their duties on behalf of their constituents. If that precedent were accepted it might reappear in guidelines on the way in which we represent our constituents in cases concerning the Department of Health and Social Security, the Inland Revenue, and so on. Hon. Members should realise that if they give ground on this simply because the Home Office has had a problem, they are laying themselves open to new areas of control. That is an extremely dangerous principle and precedent, and we should oppose the guidelines on that ground. In effect, the guidelines are a bureaucratic answer to a problem of principle which should be dealt with as such.

The problem of the time gap and whether the person to be approached is the immigration officer or somebody else has already been mentioned so I want to concentrate on constituency links. Another cultural problem is that, however distant, the many members of a visitor's family often regard themselves as one family. It will be difficult for the Minister to determine who is the appropriate Member of Parliament. The family will often have representatives in a number of constituencies and the number of constituencies concerned could probably be counted as the number of hon. Members in the House at the moment.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North) *rose*——

Mr. Meadowcroft: I will not give way because I am anxious to allow the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members to speak in the debate.

If the Minister tries to limit the right to make an application to the sponsor's Member of Parliament, the families will pick the sponsor from the constituency with the most amenable Member of Parliament. The problem will not be solved. The bureaucratic nonsense will simply be shifted further on. We should consider the circumstances rather than limiting the choice of hon. Member.

Some hon. Members take the view that because the immigration officer looks at the case, he or she has made an appropriate decision, with which the Member does not want to interfere. I doubt whether the same Members would accept such a decision if it was made by the DHSS or the Inland Revenue if a constituent was complaining about his or her treatment. In such cases a Member would look into the matter with an attitude far different than if it were an immigration case.

Our task is surely to assist constituents to express themselves more fully or to discover the reasons for a decision. That is not just my opinion; it is also the opinion of the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer), with whose views I doubt whether I would agree on virtually anything else. On 29 October he made the extremely valid point that

"it is not the function of any hon. Member to act as judge and jury in deciding whether or not an individual should be allowed entry, but only to make responsible and proper representations to the Home Office".—[*Official Report*, 29 October 1985; Vol. 84, c. 834.]

That is exactly the case. The guidelines will not assist the hon. and learned Gentleman nor me to do that job, so they should be opposed whenever possible.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that the 10-minute limit on speeches will operate from 6 pm, and I appeal for the co-operation of hon. Members.

5.57 pm

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): I agree with some of what the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) said, but it seemed to me that the Liberal

party policy is very much one of doing away with controls over visitors. That would lead to a great deal of trouble. If people could enter Britain with almost no checks, we would soon have a strong flow of immigrants.

Like several other hon. Members, I want to pay tribute to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State. He always shows great courtesy in the way that he handles these cases. He is firm but fair. He has done an excellent job and I hope that he will go on doing it for a long time. He gets a good deal of trouble from me, because I am one of those who regularly corresponds with him, as, I suspect, most hon. Members in the Chamber this afternoon do as well because we have a large number of immigrants in our constituencies. I have about 7,000 people from the Sikh community and they have many relatives and friends who wish to visit them here for holidays and for family celebrations. I always do the best that I can to assist them when they have a genuine case.

I agree that we are not judge and jury. It is extremely difficult for us to make our minds up, but we should apply some criteria when we receive applications. I try to encourage a leading member or members of the ethnic minority community to introduce Mr. or Mrs. Y and to give me the reasons for an application. I submit that to my hon. and learned Friend and usually he allows the visitor to come for a short time and that is good. But where there is a strong suspicion that a person is trying to evade the system, it is an hon. Member's duty, perhaps not to be judge and jury, but to say that in such circumstances he will not be a party to the attempt. Otherwise, he is just a rubber stamp. That would be quite wrong.

I did not know that some hon. Members refused to handle such cases. I would not do that, even if I had only a handful of immigrants living in my constituency. After all, such people have every right to come here as visitors so long as they are genuine. However, the cases must be carefully considered. In recent times, in particular, some of the replies that I have received from my hon. and learned Friend have shown that the immigration officer who perhaps turned down the request had very convincing reasons for believing that the person had no entitlement to enter the country.

Those who are entitled to come here temporarily, or on a permanent basis have nothing to fear from the system. As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has said, the rules have not changed. However, those who have an illegal purpose in mind and who are trying to trick their way into the country must be stopped by any Government in the interests of the majority of people in this country.

We would be mad to have an open-door policy. This country has a large ethnic population, and we must have sensible and strict controls. It is very much in the interest of British residents with an ethnic minority background that the rules should be properly applied and that their relatives should know that they are allowed to enter the country temporarily for a family celebration or holiday.

I know that there is no chance of my next idea being pursued immediately, but I believe that it is worth exploring the possibility of a visa system. In some ways, I wonder why the Home Office has not considered it before for all Commonwealth and foreign visitors. I mean all foreign and Commonwealth visitors; not just the black or coloured ones, but the white ones as well.

I am very conscious of the fact that I need a visa to go to India, Australia or the United States. There is quite a rigmarole before one can obtain such visas. I am fortunate in that, like many other hon. Members, my American visa is indefinite. Nevertheless, it has to be obtained, and renewed from time to time. Many countries that have had some sort of association with us in the past demand visas.

I believe that the Home Office should consider a visa system because it would regulate our intake from other countries. Those entitled to come to Britain would be able to do so without too much difficulty, and there would not be the alleged discrimination — which I do not necessarily believe takes place — between those who happen to be black and those who happen to be white. It is said that those who are black are given rather a hard time when going through the immigration procedures.

An alternative to a visa might be a bond or guarantee given by the person who would be responsible for accommodating the visitor. It may well be the brother, sister, or even the mother and father. A leading member of my local Sikh community, who is also, I am glad to say, a Conservative councillor, is very helpful to me in such matters. He wondered why the Home Office did not suggest that the guarantor should sign a document, swear an affidavit or put up a bond. The guarantor could say that Mr. X or Mr. Y was entering Britain and that he would guarantee that Mr. X or Mr. Y would return at the end of his holiday. The guarantor would then forfeit his bond if the visitor decamped.

I am sure that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister will accept that many of these people are very responsible. Hon. Members will know, as I do, of cases where the visitors have vanished. When that happened in my area recently, there was great ill feeling among those who had been responsible for recommending the man to me. They felt guilty, and have made every effort since to trace the miscreant.

The role of the Member of Parliament is essential when it comes to making a stop plea to the Home Office. It is said that sometimes the matter is not followed up, and that, having obtained a stop, the Member of Parliament has not written to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister asking permission for the person to stay. That represents a great abuse, and whoever has done it is wrong and has failed in his duty.

I do not take kindly to other hon. Members coming into my territory, particularly on such matters. I have had two such cases, but only one, I am glad to say, where I felt that the person was intruding. In the other case, the Member was courteous enough to write to me and I allowed the case to go through. But I would feel affronted if there was a string of such cases, and I believe that it would bring the whole business into disrepute if immigrants who might be refused entry were touted around from constituency to constituency by Members of Parliament who felt that there was some need to do it. It is essentially the role of the Member of Parliament in the area to be visited to shoulder at least some of the responsibility.

Despite all the criticisms that have been made, I believe that the system is good, although it provides a good deal of work and difficulty for the Member of Parliament and for the immigration service. Recently, my hon. and learned Friend the Minister told me quite sharply about a visitor who did not go back. I believe that he should come down sharply on all of us and let us know when someone has not kept to the terms of his admittance. There should then be a responsibility on the Member of Parliament to go back to whoever guaranteed that person as a genuine visitor.

[Sir Dudley Smith]

I deplore the remarks of the right hon. member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) about immigration officers. They have a difficult and trying job. There may be bad apples among them, as there are in every walk of life, but my experience is that they are courteous, dedicated and very skilled. No cause is advanced by such an attack, especially when it comes from a right hon. Member of his standing.

We need better co-operation from the local community just as we need the continued and firm approach of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister. I am very satisfied with what he is doing. He is doing it in the interests of the country as a whole, and I can certainly commend this document.

6.8 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has restated the history of this dispute. Some wild and unsubstantiated allegations have been made by the Minister of State against unnamed Members of Parliament. He produced a potential list of names, which was no doubt drawn up for his own purposes. When he produced it, he did not claim that it included every hon. Member who was guilty of one of the six so-called abuses that he mentioned in his letter.

I shall outline two cases that the Minister of State told me represented abuses. I do not apologise in any way for anything that I did in either case. Hon. Members should know the sort of thing that the Minister calls an abuse and should know what he expects us to do to our constituents. The first concerns a girl called Baljit Kaur, whose case I have raised on the Adjournment before. She was born in Birmingham and grew up there. With her mother, she visited India to see her granny who was getting old. The family had agreed that if she met anyone she liked, she could consider marrying. She did, indeed, meet someone she liked, and she married him. In the Asian community a new sort of marriage is evolving that lies somewhere between the traditional arranged marriage and our traditional love marriage. She found a young man she liked and they married in India so that her granny could be there.

Baljit stayed with her husband in India hoping that he would get his visa and that they would return to Birmingham together. She became pregnant and returned home to Birmingham to get proper medical care. Having been born in Birmingham, she found that she did not have the immunities that the people who grew up in the village in India had, and she tended to get sickness, which was bad for her pregnancy. She came to ask me to help hurry the arrival of her husband so that he could be with her before the baby was born. That was my initial involvement in the case. I wrote to the Minister and he wrote back saying that the fact that someone was pregnant was not a reason to bring forward an interview.

Eventually the baby was born—it was a lovely little girl—and the husband was desperate to come and see his daughter. He had his interview and was refused. The couple were devastated, as was I, because this was my first experience of a primary purpose case. I went to see the Minister on a number of occasions. I explained to my constituent, Baljit, that she would have a right to bring her husband here as a visitor, at least to see his first child. I thought it would be sensible if he came on that visit at about the same time as his appeal against the refusal was heard so that he would be able to give evidence in his own case. All of that was done.

The Home Office admitted him at the port and the appeal adjudicator admitted him to give evidence. Sadly and disastrously, the case was turned down and eventually the young couple went to Ireland. I do not know where they are now and I hope that everything is well for them. I still feel very badly about what was done to them. After that, the Minister has the cheek to suggest that I have done something improper in allowing a young woman to have a visit from her husband to see his first child for the first time.

The second case of so-called abuse was that of a young man who lived in Tanzania. His family came to Birmingham in 1981 on a quota voucher which entitled British citizens to come and live in Britain. He was over 21 and was therefore not allowed to come with them. He applied twice for an entry certificate to come for a visit. As every hon. Member who has any experience of immigration will know, in practice, though not in theory, anyone who has ever applied to come for permanent stay will never be allowed to visit. That is what was happening to this family. When they applied to come as a family they knew that their son was over 18 or 21—I cannot remember which—but they said that they would like him to come with them if he could. The answer was no. He stayed in Tanzania and set up a small business, which is beginning to prosper.

Twice the young man applied to visit his family—his mother, father, sister and brother—whom he had not seen for some years and twice he was turned down in Tanzania. The family in Birmingham came to see me. I wrote a letter explaining that there was no legal obligation to have a visa, that he was entitled, as a Commonwealth citizen, to come without a visa and that he should therefore come over. I said that he would probably have trouble at the port because there is no doubt that anyone who has been refused an entry certificate for a visit will have trouble. I told his family that, if he had such trouble, they should telephone me. All of that was done.

He came and saw his family. They all came to my advice bureau and they all cried—father, mother, sister, brother and he—because they were seeing each other after such a long time. He returned to Tanzania before the Minister's letter arrived saying that he should go back. That is the second case of so-called abuse. The letter I wrote is the letter that was leaked to *The Daily Telegraph*. That is the outrageous behaviour I am supposed to have indulged in that helped to spark off the row we are engaged in today.

I think that the Minister should be ashamed of himself. It is outrageous for anyone to suggest that any hon. Member seeking to represent their constituents in that way is misbehaving. I resent it. It is wrong and suggests that we should neglect the needs of our constituents in a way that I am not willing to do.

I should like to explain to the House how it goes in Ladywood and at my advice bureau. I have an advice bureau every other Saturday in my constituency. It takes place from 10 in the morning and continues until about 1 or 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Large numbers of people who are willing to sit in a queue for that length of time come to say that their granny might be coming to visit, a sister might be coming or that a nephew is coming for a

wedding. They say, "I am frightened that they will be refused. What shall we do?" In each case, I explain in detail how the system works. I explain that, if there has ever been an application for permanent settlement, a visit will not be allowed and that there will almost certainly be a refusal at the port. I tell them that they should then ring me.

I then write to the Minister and it takes him two months to reply. It used to be three months, but he has got the time down since then. He has been working at it since the row started. I explain, because it is the truth, that he always upholds the refusal. I explain that when I send the letter back to my constituent, the visitor has to go, even if a marriage or anything like that is planned. That is how it works. My constituents go away clutching a piece of paper with my telephone number on it.

Because I do that, and I do it repeatedly, and try to give my best advice to my constituents, I am in breach of paragraph 1(2) of these new guidelines. It will be held against all those potential visitors that I explain in that way to my constituents how the system works. That is outrageous. It is a constitutional breach that a Member of Parliament should not explain in truth and sincerity how the system works without biasing the potential right of their constituents to have a visitor from abroad.

The truth is — the House should note this — that almost anyone who is unmarried cannot get in as a visitor. That is because visitors are entitled to marry and remain. Because the immigration service thinks that every unmarried Asian coming in wants to marry, as a number of them do, it refuses the lot. Since the Minister changed the rules about marriage for women, the immigration service is now refusing many young women. That is one reason for the increase in the number of cases facing the Minister.

The Minister would be more honest if he took away the right for people who are here as visitors to marry and stay. It would not then be necessary to refuse every unmarried Asian male who seeks to enter Britain and, increasingly, every young Asian female. That is the way in which the system works. It is based on a prejudice and on seeking to exclude from a legal right a group of people—Asian people—who wish to come here as visitors.

I am probably running out of time, but I want to ask Conservative Members to please stop talking about immigration and about people trying to come into the country illegally and staying. That is another debate, which we will be happy to have with them, to challenge their prejudices. Today we are talking about family visitors and the rights of families to stay together. Yes, we deplore the action of the Soviet Union when it prevents families from being united and we claim to support the Helsinki Final Act and the right of families to be united. However, when it comes to our own Asian population and their wish to be close to members of their own families from abroad it is another matter. Suddenly we hear about swamping and immigration and so on.

The other thing that Conservative Members should understand is that the reason for the increase in the number of cases the Minister is facing is the increase in refusals. My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) quoted the figures. If we could break the figures down by poverty or background, they would be much grosser. Obviously, from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan many wealthy people — business men, journalists and academics — travel to and from the United Kingdom and have no trouble coming through Heathrow. However, if one comes from a village and a poor family there will be trouble. I am certain that, if my constituents have a poor background, the likelihood of refusal of their visitors is about 50 per cent. That is my experience and theirs. They are poor, proud and hard working people from a poor background.

The Minister's guidelines are not necessary. Instead, we should stop refusing genuine visitors and treat our constituents with the respect they deserve.

6.18 pm

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): So far, the House has enjoyed a good-natured debate about an issue which, essentially, concerns the relationship between individual Members of Parliament, and the relationship of hon. Members with the Home Department.

I, too, thank my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State and very much appreciate the excellent work that he does, and the sympathetic way in which he receives the representations of hon. Members, myself in particular.

The control work of the immigration service is difficult. The officers do it with immense compassion and care. I know from my observation of their working practices that they try to assist visitors to the United Kingdom in a very reasonable way. They have interpreters on duty, and they have procedures for interviewing individuals, to try to ascertain the true purpose of their visit when there is any doubt. I particularly welcome the statement by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary that 52 further posts are to be provided to improve the arrangements. That is good news.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) referred to the number of people from the Indian sub-continent who were being stopped at Heathrow, in particular. The facts are that only about 1 per cent. are ever stopped at Heathrow—99 per cent. of visitors from the Indian sub-continent who seek to enter the United Kingdom, for whatever reason, come through without hindrance. That is the measure of the matter. Therefore, we are concerned basically with the 1 per cent. of people who, for one reason or another, are subject to the immigration officers' control.

The guidelines that we are considering seek to provide a working formula, a relationship between hon. Members and the Home Department. They are generally to be welcomed, and I endorse them. There was a departure from the original draft guidelines, where my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State suggested that hon. Members should contact the port of entry to ascertain the facts. I fully understand the reason why that was included in the original guidelines. I think that hon. Members, regardless of where they sit, will know that it is difficult to make a decision about whether to phone the Minister's Department to impose a stop, as it is called, on whether a person should be deported.

That is the one occasion when an hon. Member has a direct means of intervening with the Executive. It is the one occasion when an hon. Member is acting in a quasi-judicial role. I believe that there is an obligation for the Member, under those circumstances, to take into account several factors—a duty to the country, a duty to the House and the rules that the House has approved, a duty to his or her constituency as a whole, a duty, too, to the immigration officers who are, after all, civil servants

[Mr. John Wheeler]

seeking to discharge their function fairly and honourably, as well as a duty to the individual who has sought the hon. Member's intervention.

If the hon. Member is seeking to discharge all those functions honestly, he would probably like to have the best available information to hand upon which to base a decision. Frankly, listening to the story of the application and then checking the facts with the immigration officer at the port of entry is a very good way of trying to understand exactly where the balance of truth lies. I frequently do that myself. I find that the chief immigration officer is always helpful. He willingly reads over the notes that have been taken, willingly answers questions and enables me to make a judgment on an informed basis about whether I should intervene with the Executive and the way in which its function is being discharged. That seems to me to be a perfectly reasonable and honourable way to proceed.

Although I note that the guidelines remove the obligation for an hon. Member, in the first instance, to approach the immigration officer in that way, I commend the principle behind that because it is sound if we are concerned about balance and fairness between the various competing interests that we have to judge as Members of the House.

The role of an hon. Member intervening in another hon. Member's constituency is a serious point. This place works only if we behave in an honourable way towards each other. If we intervened across the constituency boundary, choas would reign. It would become an unimaginable nightmare for us all, and is therefore undesirable. A Member should take up a case in another Member's constituency only in very exceptional circumstances.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wheeler: I shall not give way. I want to press on.

If there are special and exceptional circumstances—for example, if an hon. Member is ill or away—the hon. Member may say to a colleague nearby, "Please cover for me." However, as a general principle, that is wrong. It is within my knowledge that, unfortunately, there has been a certain amount of touting around, of seeking to find an hon. Member who would do the bidding of an individual or pressure group, willy-nilly and without regard to the consequences. There is some evidence that that has gone on. It must be wrong, and we must oppose it in the interests of the good administration of the House.

Mr. Bidwell: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wheeler: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I press on, but time is limited.

In looking at the deadlines, we must have some sort of working relationship with the Home Department. In setting a deadline of 12 working days, my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State has got it about right. However, the guidelines are no more than that. Just as there are always special cases in respect of immigration matters as a whole, so there are always special circumstances that will affect the interpretation of the guidelines. My hon. and learned Friend has made it clear that he is always willing to consider those special circumstances.

I pay tribute to my hon. and learned Friend's private office. Outside No. 10 Downing street, he has perhaps the largest private office of any Minister, as befits the amount of the correspondence that he has to cope with. I, and I believe most other hon. Members, find that his private office is always willing to be of very great assistance to hon. Members who approach it. It is always willing to give useful advice and to see that cases are properly considered. In a dificult area, we try to establish fairness in the way in which we handle those immigration cases.

As the right hon. Member for Gorton said, even the Opposition intend to have a form of immigration control. The immediate consequence of that is that sooner or later, whatever the form of control, one will create hard cases, where there is an area of dispute or doubt. Any country that seeks to control entry into its jurisdiction, as we do in the United Kingdom, and as all other western countries do, comes up against the difficulty of making the procedures work.

I welcome the guidelines. They are a fair attempt to provide a working arrangement. I wish them well.

6.28 pm

Mr. Stan Thorne (Preston): Like many other hon. Members who are participating in the debate, I have a large Asian community in my constituency. Many of the Asian families in Preston have been there for a period of anything from 10 to 20 years. Many have become naturalised British subjects. They still tend towards the extended family culture that was their background. Thus visitors seek to come and spend some time with them in their homes.

When we consider the Minister's proposals we are considering the question of human rights. We accept that it is a human right for people from many parts of the world to visit their relatives and close friends in this country. Many Asians in this country, after their experiences of the past few years, feel that their visitors are treated as criminals at airports. They feel that their visitors are not on trial but are guilty as and when they arrive. The only protection that the visitors have against such a situation is their relatives' Member of Parliament. Clearly, what has been at issue over recent months, directly or indirectly in this House, is whether hon. Members should continue to have the right to make direct representations to Ministers about cases.

I like other hon. Members would like to pay tribute to the way in which the Minister's private office responds when approached by hon. Members. Very often, one gets the impression that it is grossly overworked and under pressure. In spite of that, my experience is that it has been helpful. I wish that I could say the same for the Minister who is responsible for these matters.

Like other Members who have spoken today, I have regular surgeries. Today, almost 80 per cent. of the people who come to see me are Asians with problems that are directly associated with relatives, visitors, fiancés and so on. When these people enter a surgery, they are clearly looking for guidance from the hon. Member with regard to what they have already heard, directly or indirectly from other sources, are likely to be their problems on arrival at the airport. They want to know if they should go to the airport and, if so, how many of them should go. They want to know if they will be interviewed and what the nature of the interview will be. They want to know what regulations govern entry.

One tries to give these people some guidance in advance. Regrettably, of course, we sometimes do not get that opportunity. The first we know about an arrival at the airport is a telephone call which may come on Christmas day, new year's day, or a Saturday or a Sunday. The timing of the telephone call is obviously immaterial to the visitor but the hon. Member must try to respond.

Some of the visitors are fiancés who come purely to see members of the family. The very fact that they are fiancés places them in a different category and makes their position almost hopeless. Some visitors come to see their wives and they very rarely get past the immigration office, although that sometimes happens. The main task of the Member of Parliament is to represent those cases and to assist those people to meet their families.

I should like briefly, in the time available, to give an example of a recent case in my constituency. I do not want hon. Members to suggest that it is an isolated case which could not happen more than once because I am sorry to say that that has not been my experience.

The son of the sister of one of my constituents was working in Arabia. He came on a visit to the United Kingdom intending to go on to a further visit in India to see relatives. He carried with him a three-way air ticket Dhahran to London to Bombay to Dhahran. He also had a letter from his employer of five years, saying that he was well paid, receiving 250 rials a week and that he had given my constituent's relative three months' holiday and hoped that my constituent's relative would enjoy that holiday with relatives here and in India. My constituent's relative carried £1,500 in cash so there was no question of his not being able to pay his way. He arrived on Saturday 8 March and he departed on 8 March to India on the instructions and at the behest of the immigration officer.

There were long interviews at the airport, including an interview with the would-be visitor's uncle, a constituent of mine who has lived in Preston for 20 years. He was interviewed from 8.15 pm for three hours. He had no previous experience of the kind of cross-examination to which he was subjected and he did not know much about the work circumstances of his sister's son. How could he have? The interview that took place was, in his words, "shocking", "insulting" and "provocative". He is a diabetic with a heart condition. He collapsed during the interview and a doctor was brought in to attend to him.

That is the experience of a relative of someone who came to Britain for a visit. I cannot help feeling that if the visitor came from white South Africa or was a white European or a white American, that situation would not have arisen. It is no wonder that one feels that racism plays a part in the way that decisions are made at airports and in the Minister's office in such cases.

We should be considering more humane rules covering the entry of visitors to this country. It is clear that the Government's policy is not based on humane treatment and the protection of human rights, but is a deliberate policy of restricting entry to Asians. That is the Government's raison d'être.

6.37 pm

Mr. Derek Spencer (Leicester, South): On 29 October last year, I received a letter from my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, saying that among my cases was one which represented the problems with which his Department was faced. I was asked in that letter if I would consent to the publication of the letters about my case. I wrote back on 5 November to say that I was of course only too willing for full publication to be made of that and any other correspondence relating to immigration matters that had passed between my hon. and learned Friend and myself. It was very important to my constituents that such matters should be fully ventilated. I am curious that Opposition Members did not write back in similar terms.

Most visiting has nothing to do with immigration. The more flexible the visiting policy, the less strain there is on other parts of our immigration laws. I do not share the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) that we are in any way exercising a quasi-judicial function. How can I, as a Member of Parliament, elected to represent the constituents of Leicester, South, who include 18,000 people of Asian origin, in this one area and not in others, act in a quasi-judicial capacity? I regard that argument as a complete non-starter.

I shall state my position and be judged on it. I regard myself as an advocate—albeit a responsible advocate—on behalf of my constituents, who wish to receive a visitor. It is against that background that I invite my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State to consider a number of points. First, will he ensure that the interpreters in the secondary examination area at terminal 3 use direct speech and do not use indirect speech? It is inappropriate for an immigration officer to say to the interpreter, "Ask him this—" and to get the answer, "He says that—". It should be done exactly as it is in the courts and other places where accuracy of representation is essential and direct speech should be used.

After all, the crux of the matter often lies in the credibility of the person being asked the question. That is a tricky enough problem in a court where people using a language with which they are totally familiar speak face to face with others in direct speech. When the examination takes place in the secondary examination area through an interpreter it is an even trickier problem. It is not surprising if, in individual cases, immigration officers from time to time make mistakes about the credibility of the person to whom they are putting the questions.

Secondly, will my hon. and learned Friend instruct immigration officers to attach only due weight, and not undue weight, to lies that might be told by the potential visitor? There is too great a tendency to jump to the conclusion that, merely because someone is telling less than the truth, he is disqualified under the rules from entering. That is not so and should not be so. I invite my hon. and learned Friend to say that the immigration officer must be satisfied that the lie is relevant to the issue which he is considering and that there may be other reasons why the person is telling lies. Experience of life shows that a person sometimes tells lies to bolster an otherwise good case which he reasonably fears will not be believed by the person to whom he is speaking. That fact is sometimes overlooked.

My third point concerns deadlines. Will my hon. and learned Friend adopt a relaxed attitude to them? A letter which he sent to me and which contained deadlines took three times as long to arrive as an identical letter sent to my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester). I believe that, if we apply strict and unrelaxed deadlines, we shall come to grief.

My fourth point concerns removal costs. It is not generally known that, when the Minister has eventually turned down the Member's representation and said that the

[Mr. Derek Spencer]

person here on temporary admission must go home, there is no objection to that person using his own ticket. Greater publicity should be given to the procedure whereby the visitor can use his ticket to go home and save the public purse. Recently, I have put this system into operation in my constituency and found that people were only too willing to pay their way back in just the same way as they paid their way here. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will give publicity to this. Merely because, at the end of the period of temporary admission, a person is told to go and instructions are given for him to leave the country should not mean, ipso facto, that the public purse has to pick up the tab.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary asked us to save the system. Frankly, I cannot save it. All I can do is work with it, with fairness and responsibility. That is what I sought to do under the old rules and what I shall seek to do under the new.

6.44 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): The origins of this debate and the guidelines go back to last October, when the Minister of State, Home Office, met a deputation from the Immigration Service Union. The discussions were obviously very heated. The hon. and learned Gentleman has denied that the deputation threatened to withdraw co-operation in replying to representations by Members of Parliament in immigration matters, but it is clear that the ISU demanded that something be done about the number of representations by MPs on immigration matters. It was taken to heart by the Minister of State in the sequence of events so comprehensively outlined by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman).

There was a series of extraordinary events, including serious allegations by the Minister of State against a number of hon. Members for abusing the immigration laws. Days later, there were two full-page feature articles in the *Daily Telegraph*. The second carried the headline,

"Blake Baker concludes his report on unwelcome arrivals —MPs ready to greet dubious immigrants".

The article contained a mass of detailed confidential information which I was told in answers to parliamentary questions could only have been made available by immigration service management and/or the private office of the Minister of State.

The article produced a list of Members of Parliament, described as the

"Top 20 MPs in the Terminal Three representation league."

It was an interesting list. It included the Conservative hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) —I agree with many of the views he expressed today— the Conservative Members for Slough (Mr. Watts) and for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler) and, surprisingly, the Conservative Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) who is the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of State.

The article stated:

"Some might argue that more than half their interventions were justified. The converse is that nearly half were not.

What can be done? Apart from beefing up the Immigration Service, there could be extra controls at overseas points of departure, but that would mean extra burdens on British missions abroad. A financial bond by sponsors has been suggested.

A good first step, however, would be for MPs to restrict their intervention to only deserving cases of which they have firsthand knowledge and which they are prepared to substantiate."

Following several parliamentary questions by myself and others, I was eventually told that the disclosures to the *Daily Telegraph* were to be the subject of an internal inquiry in the Home Office. After some time, I was given a copy of a letter dated 27 February by the Minister of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), which stated:

"The Home Secretary and I regret what occurred. The disclosure of your letter, the leaking of the statistical information and the manner in which both documents were handled within the Department were wrong. As a result new instructions have been given to staff in the Immigration Service making it clear that free circulation for general interest of copies of MPs' correspondence with their constituents is a serious breach of confidence; that such correspondence must be given the same protection as other official information; and that failure to do so can give rise to disciplinary and, in certain circumstances, criminal proceedings. It has also been made clear that while it is good management practice to make available to staff statistical and other information of current or topical interest about their work, official information which is available for management purposes should be appropriately restricted in its circulation."

So much for the internal inquiry and the clear breach of the Official Secrets Act. We were told that further inquiries would involve some 300 personnel and so far as the Home Office was concerned the matter was closed.

It is very clear indeed that the number of representations from Members of Parliament has increased in recent years. That is clearly due to the fact that the number of people refused entry to this country has also steadily increased over recent years. In 1983 the number refused entry was 13,981, in 1984 it was 17,355, and in a recent answer to another parliamentary question I was told that in 1985 the number refused entry was 18,505. Of those, more than 10,000 originated in the New Commonwealth and Pakistan. As has already been said, only a very small number seek the help of MPs—something like one in five.

In my view, this situation will continue until something positive is done. Yesterday I suggested action that could be taken by the Government—the introduction of a right of appeal, which could be exercised here, for those refused entry. That is a very modest proposal which was first made in 1967. I hope very much that, instead of making wild allegations about the irresponsible behaviour of MPs in these matters, the Government will seriously consider the introduction of such a welcome reform, which would in fact be the introduction of natural justice into these matters, and will allow those who are the subject of appeals to attend the hearings in the country where they are being held.

I am very concerned about a number of matters in connection with the immigration service. It was the subject of very critical comment by the Commission for Racial Equality, which criticised the racist attitudes of many immigration officers, the stereotyped attitudes which they adopt towards members of ethnic communities, the quality of their training and other matters.

I am very concerned about the very serious allegations that have been made concerning changes to and endorsement of the passport of a Hong Kong British passport holder, from which there were surreptitious and unlawful deletions which resulted in the person concerned being expelled from the United Kingdom.

I complained to the Minister of State about these very serious matters on 14 November 1985 and received a reply

on 5 December saying that the Minister of State shared my concern about the allegations and agreed that a full inquiry would be carried out. That was confirmed on 13 January, since when I have heard absolutely nothing further. I hope that the Minister of State will be able to let me know very quickly what the present situation is with regard to the inquiries.

Terminal 4 will open on 1 April. At the moment it is seriously understaffed with immigration officers and no interpreters have been appointed. I was told that terminal 4 immigration staff would have to use the eight interpreters who are available at Heathrow. Instead of again abusing MPs who are trying to assist their constituents, the Minister of State would be much better employed ensuring that there are adequate numbers of immigration officers trained to do their jobs properly at all ports of entry, and certainly that there are appropriate numbers of interpreters with proper training and proper career prospects to help immigration officers at those ports of entry.

I will not reinforce the criticism of these guidelines that have been made by hon. Members on both sides of the House, but particularly by Opposition Members. In my view they are unacceptable and unworkable and remain unconstitutional. I certainly believe that they are wholly unnecessary.

I have proposed the introduction of a right of appeal, an increase in the number of immigration officers and improvement of the training of immigration officers. Those steps would reduce much of the burden now on the Minister of State and his officials and I hope very much indeed that the Government will respond suitably.

These guidelines are clearly designed to intimidate black and Asian British people into not seeking the help of their constituency Members of Parliament. These rules have clearly been introduced as part of the political direction which the Government have pursued ever since 1979 to introduce, step by step, further restrictions on entry into this country and to present more difficulties for people who wish to visit this country to stay with their relatives and friends here. A leak last year indicated that, within days of the Conservative Government being elected in 1979, officials were seeking by administrative means to make it more difficult for people to visit this country freely.

I hope that that political direction will be recognised and that when the Minister of State winds up we are not going to have a further dollop of waffle and abuse levelled against those Members of this House who seek to help their constituents. I hope that we shall have some indication that he is going to take positive action to tackle the problems which he, and he alone, can tackle. I hope that he will consider seriously the proposals that I have made and not treat us again to the sort of abuse and wild allegations with which we have been greeted so often in the past.

6.56 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), although I did not agree with much, if any, of his speech, particularly because of what happened recently when I was a visitor to his constituency. Perhaps if I had let him know in advance, I would not have had to face the problems that I had at the university in his town; I might have received the courteous treatment which I believe is given to people when they come to this country.

I must at the start totally refute the impression given by Opposition Members that we have a set of racist immigration officers and that there are racists in the Home Office who are intent upon making the system unworkable, on picking out a particular set of visitors and making life unbearable for them.

The Labour party seems to believe that it is its prerogative and privilege to represent what are known as the ethnic communities. That is nonsense. There are hon. Members on the Tory Benches with larger numbers of such constituents than any Opposition Members have and I know from my own experience that everyone is given the fairest treatment.

But, in a situation such as that faced by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State and the Government, in which there was misuse or abuse of the system, the Government were absolutely right to draw up a set of guidelines—and they are only guidelines—for Members of Parliament to follow.

In 1979, when I came into the House, facing a new experience, as most of us do in these conditions, I would have welcomed certain guidelines. I am glad to see that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) is in his place. He complained that the number of refusals is up. I suggest that he is casting a slight on the officials by implying that they are employing a different interpretation of the rules as they stand. Those rules have not changed, as the right hon. Gentleman will know, since they were introduced in 1971.

I think that the right hon. Gentleman was totally wrong, in giving the statistics which he produced, to ignore the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), because immigration officers are bound to look at those from disadvantaged countries much more closely than at those coming from more prosperous countries. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] On the basis that it is obviously going to be far more tempting for visitors from those places to overstay. This is partly the problem. It is naive of the right hon. Gentleman and his right hon. and hon. Friends to think that every visitor who comes through Heathrow airport or any other port of entry is a genuine visitor who has every intention of returning to his point of departure. Obviously, the majority do, but it is right that we and the Home Office should be vigilant. I am extremely pleased that the guidelines have been produced.

It is disturbing that at a time when, at last, immigration numbers are decreasing, which I and all Conservative Members welcome, the number of refusals seems to be increasing. That almost gives the hint that more people are trying the system. They are doing so because of the assistance that they have been given by certain hon. Members. They are trying the system because they know full well that some people will slip through the net.

For Opposition Members to chastise the Government for having stricter rules and interpretation of them and for considering closely those who visit the United Kingdom is, as usual, pure humbug. They do so for nothing more than political advantage. They seek to curry some favour with a certain sector of the community. Conservative Members, who represent fairly the interests of all their constituents from wherever they come and whatever their colour, will certainly be better respected at the general election.

I am worried about the present system because it is the easiest thing in the world for hon. Members, their

[Mr. John Carlisle]

secretaries or others who must deal with queries if hon. Members happen to be absent, to put a stop on, without thinking of the consequences or the merits of a particular case. Moreover, hon. Members know that once the intended visitors arrive and have had a stop put on them, the process of appeals and, ultimately, of removing them is long. It is a fact that a number overstay, and we are naive if we think that they do not.

Frequently in local and national papers one sees the publicity that such cases attract and, indeed, which Opposition Members attract in their political interests. The emotional side is emphasised and we have stories of "tugs of love". Under the system of appeal such people can stay for many years. It must be prudent for any country to examine carefully those who enter, whether as visitors or immigrants.

The guidelines must be accepted, and I welcome them for three reasons. First, there is absolute evidence, as the Minister has shown and Opposition Members have almost admitted, that there is some misuse of the system. Hon. Members have undoubtedly been advertising the fact that they are willing and able to help any visitor who comes and who is in trouble. I am a little worried, regarding cross-constituency interest, about the part of the guidelines which talks about national groups being used as an excuse for one hon. Member to take cases for another. That is an extremely easy excuse.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Carlisle: I shall not give way because I do not have time.

That makes it easy for another hon. Member, usually from the Opposition, to take up a case, in the hope of gaining political advantage. That is a dangerous road to follow.

The second reason why the guidelines must be accepted is that some of us have faith in immigration officers, their staff and the staff at the Home Office. Opposition Members, especially the right hon. Member for Gorton, have cast aspersions on the integrity of those officers who are doing a difficult job, which I find disgraceful. I tend to trust, if I can, men and women who have been trained to do their jobs and who have long experience on the basis that the authority given to them under the Immigration Act 1971 should not be absolute, but should certainly be considered and, in the majority of cases, accepted.

The third reason is that the various representations from hon. Members are clogging the system. That means more disappointments for those who are genuinely waiting to immigrate under existing laws or to visit. Because Opposition Members have been misusing and abusing the system it is probably making it more difficult for the majority of genuine visitors to enter. Hon. Members who have visited terminal 3 at 8 o'clock on a weekday or weekend morning, as I hope all hon. Members have, will understand how the system can clog up, and appreciate the time that it takes for people to come through immigration control. It is right that they should be vetted, but the system will virtually disintegrate under the spurious claims of Opposition Members in an attempt to bring in virtually every visitor who makes a protest.

More consideration should be given to the point of departure, where more questions should perhaps be asked of those who seek to visit. That could stop the heartache when people arrive who are obviously not genuine visitors. I urge my hon. and learned Friend the Minister to make further investigations into whether more work and, possibly, manpower can be put at that end to avoid the problems that we face at this end.

If hon. Members are so keen to represent and put a stop on virtually any case of refusal that comes to them, they should put their money where their mouth is and become the sole sponsor for the visitor. That should be published and the general public should know when those genuine visitors, as we hope they will be, return. In that way, hon. Members who make representations can be responsible for their actions.

I welcome the guidelines. They will be of tremendous use to hon. Members on both sides of the House, and I hope that they will receive a welcome from all parts of the House this evening.

7.6 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I doubt whether anyone will describe the speech of the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) as a helpful contribution to our debate. I should declare that I am the chairman of the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service, although, obviously, that has no financial implications.

The Minister of State and his predecessor have given the strong impression that they resent the large number of representations made by Members of Parliament in cases involving refusals at airports and related matters. The Minister's predecessor, as early as the summer of 1979, was quoted in the press as saying that he was upset at the time spent signing letters to Members of Parliament about visitors' refusals. Last week the present Minister, in exchanges in the House, complained of the large number of letters that he had to sign which, apparently, had been scribbled—I use his word—by immigration officers.

It would have been wholly unsatisfactory to insist that Members of Parliament must contact the chief immigration officer about refusals when the sponsor has contacted us. All hon. Members know that there are no difficulties in contacting the Minister's private office, or in contacting the duty officer at the Home Office in the evenings or at weekends. Certainly, I have not experienced any difficulty. Leaving aside all the other issues involved, it is doubtful whether it would be so simple to contact the chief immigration officer, for example at Heathrow. Some hon. Members have mentioned the Minister's private office, and I wish to join them in stating that I have always found the staff helpful and courteous. I make no complaint about his private office.

When constituents contact hon. Members about the refusal at ports of relatives or close friends, it is not part of our job to act as some sort of judge and decide on the merits of the case. The original guidelines suggested that, if we contacted the chief immigration officer, he would tell us about the matters involved, and that we would then make the decision whether to make representations.

As I said in an intervention, when matters come before us concerning housing, social security, pensions and taxation, and all the other issues about which our constituents write to us or come to our surgeries to see us, we do not act as some kind of judge. We do not decide whether a person should be rehoused, nor do we look into all the merits of the case. Our job as Members of Parliament is to write as sympathetically as possible to

officialdom and to make the best possible case on behalf of our constituents. There is no difference between cases like that and cases in which constituents come to see us about a close relative or friend who has been refused permission to enter as a visitor.

It is rather important to get our words right, because we are not talking about immigrants. The people about whom representations are made in such cases deny that they are potential immigrants. They are not immigrants in any sense, any more than the millions of visitors from all over the world who come to our shores and are presumably welcome—because tourism, it is said, is useful to the Exchequer—are immigrants.

The sponsor is usually worried and tense and in a state of distress when refusal occurs. He might well have been waiting at the airport for a long time, often overnight, and getting little information about the passenger he is there to meet. He becomes increasingly worried about what is happening. We have to picture the situation in which many of our constituents find themselves. At places like Heathrow more could be done, I believe, to advise people when a passenger has been held for further and prolonged questioning. The Home Secretary is now present and I hope that he will take note of that suggestion. Why is it not possible at Heathrow, and perhaps at Gatwick, to have an information desk manned by an immigration officer who could give up-to-date information about these matters?

I am often told by constituents—and I believe them—that they find it extremely difficult to get information about why someone has not been allowed in, but when refusal has not yet occurred. That difficulty should be resolved, and it would be beneficial, certainly for community relations, if something were done. It is also the case that many of the people contacting us have lived in Britain for many years. They are totally law-abiding—that is rarely in question. They often resent the fact that because the person whom they have sponsored, a close relative or friend, is coming from the Indian sub-continent that causes far more difficulties than if he or she were coming from some other part of the globe. They feel that people coming to Britain from the Indian sub-continent face far more difficulties than other people.

I readily accept that not everyone who says he wishes to visit Britain is a genuine potential visitor. I also accept that it is the job of immigration officers to satisfy themselves about each passenger under the relevant immigration rules approved by the House. Like my hon. Friends, however, I sometimes wonder whether there is an excessive amount of suspicion when a person comes from the Indian sub-continent. People who have lived in Britain for many years, who pay their taxes, and who have never broken the law and would never dream of doing so, resent being treated almost as criminals when they go to Heathrow and are subjected to hostile questions.

I am rather disappointed by paragraph 2 of the guidelines, which says that the Minister will not normally intervene to overturn a decision about refusal taken at the ports. I suppose that is why I have never received a reply from the Minister about refusal cases where he has not accepted the decision of the immigration officer. Presumably, in most such cases the letter that is signed by the Minister was written by the immigration officer or the chief immigration officer responsible for the refusal. It is hardly likely that that person will challenge his own decision.

I am far from happy either about paragraph 12 which says that the Minister is unlikely to overturn a decision where an appeal is dismissed and no recommendation is made by the adjudicator. In the main, I am not talking now about visitors' refusal cases. Some cases, often of settlement, are important—this is about immigration—and I hope that if new facts are given after an appeal has been turned down and after an hon. Member has written to the Minister of State, the whole case will be looked at properly and fairly even if no recommendation was made by the adjudicator. Some adjudicators seem to accept that they should not make a recommendation.

Paragraph 17 was the subject of a great deal of comment in the debate. I am not touting for business. Like my hon. Friends, I am always reluctant to take up an individual case from outside my constituency. I need a good deal of persuading to do so. I always reply to non-constituents—I am not talking just about immigration cases—and explain, politely and courteously I hope, that there is a long-standing parliamentary convention that a Member of Parliament does not take up individual cases from outside his constituency.

If some hon. Members on the Government side refuse as a matter of principle to take up cases of people who are refused entry, not only is that unfair to the passenger, but also, of course, to the person who has lived in Britain for many years. Just because a person lives in the constituency of such an hon. Member, why should he not be able to contact his MP to have the matter taken up? It is difficult simply to turn down a person in these circumstances and tell them that we are not able to pursue the case.

I hope the Home Secretary understands that point. My interpretation of the wording of paragraph 17 is that no one but an MP can contact the private office. That seems rather unfortunate and I hope that my interpretation is wrong. If, for example, one is away—say at the height of the summer or attending to parliamentary duties—I hope that the agent of the Member of Parliament will be able to make representations. The Home Secretary is nodding about what I have just said. It will be in *Hansard* and I shall send a copy to my agent just in case there are any difficulties.

I hope to see a fresh approach and more understanding from the Minister of State, who I hope will take a positive approach and not adopt a resentful feeling that receiving and signing hon. Members' letters is not right. That is all part of his duty as a Minister of State, just as it is our duty to take up cases about our constituents.

7.19 pm

Mr. Geoff Lawler (Bradford, North): I should also like to acknowledge the great patience shown and the sterling work carried out by the people in my right hon. Friend's private office. I also acknowledge the extreme helpfulness of immigration officers at the ports. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) was extremely unrestrained in making allegations. I have a chance to answer, but officials in my hon. Friend's office and immigration officers do not have the same opportunity. For that reason the right hon. Gentleman's remarks were all the more disgraceful. I hope he will take an opportunity to withdraw them—especially his remark accusing me of touting. As the debate progressed he must have learned that the practice I follow and which I have

[Mr. Geoff Lawler]

explained to him is copied by a good number of Members in an effort to be helpful to their constituents. If he wishes to withdraw and apologise, I shall give way.

Mr. Kaufman: I greatly admire the hon. Gentleman's pro forma letter. I never thought of something like that, because I thought the Home Office would disapprove of it. Now that it has the stamp of approval of the Home Office, I might start using it myself.

Mr. Lawler: I regret that the right hon. Gentleman has not apologised. As long as he uses the letter in the same responsible way as I use it, I will be more than happy to let him have a copy. His speech was short on, indeed completely devoid of, any constructive proposals — in contrast to the speech of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State who produced the most constructive proposal to come out of this debate: the appointment of 52 extra staff. That will be good news for all visitors to Britain.

This debate is about how to make a manifestly unfair system that is open to abuse work in an efficient manner. There is a danger that the demands of the minority who are refused admission will affect the rights of the majority. The rights of the majority are to enter this country with the minimum of fuss and the minimum of delay. The reason for this debate is that those rights are being infringed because of the time that immigration officers have to take in preparing reports, following representations from hon. Members.

It is not much of a welcome to arrive in a country and then have to wait eight or 12 hours before a decision is made about whether one will be allowed to enter the country. What would be the reaction of hon. Members if they arrived in Pakistan and found that they had to wait for 10 hours before such a decision was made? What would be the reacton of an hon. Member who went to meet his mother at Heathrow and found that he had to wait eight or 10 hours before a decision was made? Therefore, we have to balance the rights of the majority against the rights of those who are refused admission to this country. It is important not to forget the right of the majority to enter this country with minimum delay. The guidelines have been drawn up in order to try to alleviate those delays.

Of people refused admission, there are those who try to flout the system. It is acknowledged that people try to enter this country by the back door by flagrantly abusing the visitor system. However, the low numbers of absconders among those who are given temporary admission show that the majority of visitors are genuine. They sometimes fall foul of the regulations for two reasons. First, they fall foul of them through ignorance, lack of intelligence or lack of preparation. They may be unaware of all the questions that they will be asked. I should find it extremely difficult to draw up my family tree. I do not even know the names of all my cousins. Therefore, I understand some of the problems that face those who are less well educated.

Secondly, some people are misled by advisers in their host countries. That is deplorable and I hope that the Government will make representations about it to high commissions and embassies. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State is aware of the fact that recently I have had to deal with the sad case of a young man who was advised to tell lies. He was told that if he told lies he would stand a better chance of getting into this country. If he had told the truth, he would have had no problem. As it is, through his own folly and through being misled by advisers, who I dare say are making a pretty penny out of the racket they run, he has had to return home.

All these factors affect one group of people in particular: people from the Indian sub-continent. They account for 11 per cent. of non-EEC visitors but for 55 per cent. of the refusals. Despite that, it is wrong to imagine that everybody who is refused leave to enter is a potential illegal immigrant and that therefore we should wash our hands of them.

As the system exists, it is an abdication of responsibility if Members of Parliament do not use it and give a fair hearing to somebody who is refused entry. Hon. Members are only too happy on numerous occasions to prove that officials in other Departments are not always right. Therefore, nobody would claim that immigration officials are always right. They may not have all the facts. However, as with most official matters, there is a line of appeal: that line of appeal in immigration cases is through representations by hon. Members. Hon. Members therefore have a duty seriously to consider using the system and not to abdicate their responsibilities. Right hon. and hon. Members must acknowledge that it is equally wrong to ignore the "pressure to emigrate" argument. That must be acknowledged as common sense. It would be wrong to ignore the fact that some people will try to abuse the system by using the visitor system as a means of entering the country for permanent settlement.

The way to stamp out abuse is by having effective control and ensuring that the message gets back that the immigration system cannot be abused, because those who try to abuse it will be caught out. Fewer people will then try it on by coming to this country and attempting to use the visitor system to enter and settle here permanently.

I applaud my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary's attempt to introduce a more efficient and better service for our constituents. I deeply regret the withdrawal of the first draft. I do not believe that the new guidelines will result in any change in the existing practice. They merely restate what is done now. The only definite change is the unfortunate removal of the instruction that in the first instance Members of Parliament, should go to the port of entry. I saw nothing wrong with that suggestion.

It is important for Members of Parliament to be made aware immediately of the reasons why somebody has been refused entry. Therefore they should contact the port of entry in the first instance. They could then decide instantly whether somebody was abusing the system and trying to enter the country on a false passport, using a cock and bull story that could not be supported by a shred of evidence. Members of Parliament would not seek then to make representations on their behalf. If, however, there has been a genuine misunderstanding, or if all the facts are not known, Members of Parliament can advise and help the sponsor to make more effective representations.

The initial draft would have been extremely helpful to our constituents. It would have enabled Members of Parliament to provide a much better service. It is a great shame that it was withdrawn and that we must continue to use the private office as a go-between. It is difficult to know how we can help to clear up misunderstandings if we do not know what the misunderstandings are in the first place. In no way would it have affected the rights of Members of Parliament, and it would have saved the time of all concerned.

I regret the removal of this positive step, and I hope that it will be reconsidered. It was removed for all the wrong reasons. It was removed partly because of a genuine misunderstanding and partly because there may be those who do not wish to get involved in such cases. However, it was also removed because of the deliberately misleading propaganda campaign that was waged by the Opposition. They waged a scaremongering campaign which needlessly, as I have seen from my mail bag, raised anxieties among the Asian community. That was thoroughly irresponsible and it is to be condemned.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lawler: In a moment.

I shall give an example of their deliberately misleading and irresponsible campaign. Recently I visited an Asian community centre where a petition was going round which said: "Please sign below, condemning these new guidelines which will restrict visitors' rights." The wording was only in English. Having talked to people there, I knew that a significant number of those who were being asked to sign the petition were unable to read English. Nevertheless, they were being told that it was all right to sign the petition, despite the fact that the wording at the top of the petition was a gross distortion of the intentions of the original draft guidelines.

Mr. Sheerman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lawler: We are on a time limit. I feel sure that the hon. Gentleman appreciates that that is why I do not intend to give way.

Mr. Sheerman: The hon. Gentleman said that he would give way.

Mr. Lawler: I have changed my mind.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Earnest Armstrong): Order. The hon. Gentleman is almost on his 10 minutes. He has another few seconds; that is all.

Mr. Lawler: As for the decision that somebody should be deported after four days, I ask for flexibility. That will create difficulties if arrangements have to be made in Pakistan or Bangladesh for somebody to meet a young girl or an elderly mother at the airport and convey them for some distance. There should therefore be flexibility.

If we are to be honest, the existing system is a safety valve. The system is not adequate, but it is a safety valve which, if screwed down further, will be unfair to visitors and sponsors. If, however, the screw were to be loosened, the system would be open to abuse and would be unfair to honest visitors and to the rest of the community. What we really need is a new system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has exceeded his 10 minutes now. I call Mr. Jeremy Corbyn.

7.29 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): It is unfortunate that there is a 10-minute time limit in this debate.

The reasons for the debate are due entirely to the Home Office, which has created this issue. It has peddled it and used the media to attack Members of Parliament who take up immigration cases.

In a reply given to the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) on 19 March, the Home Secretary grandly said that the guidelines now being issued are intended to find a "means of improvement" for hon. Members taking up immigration cases. Frankly, I fail to see what can be an improvement in a system that is designed to curtail the role of hon. Members effectively to represent people in this country who are suffering great difficulties because of the immigration laws.

Some weeks ago I quoted a letter which had been sent by the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) to firm of solicitors about an immigration case with which I was involved. She wrote:

"I wonder if you are aware that David Waddington is working towards the introduction of new regulations which will prevent MPs such as Jeremy Corbyn exercising an open market in allowing people, such as Mr. X, from coming into this country with illegal passports."

To put it mildly, that is a disgraceful letter. It is a disgraceful assertion which, I believe, could come only from private discussions with the Minister of State.

The background to this problem is largely of the Home Office's creation. We are now offered a new set of guidelines which are, frankly, unworkable. They are also unfair and serve to undermine the ability of a Member of Parliament to represent people in this country.

Paragraph 3 relates to representations and states that the removal of a passenger will be

"deferred for a period of 12 days to enable the Member to submit written representations."

I do not know whether the Minister has any experience of what it is like to represent an area where one is dealing with many immigration cases with a limited number of staff. It would be physically difficult to get the necessary amount of work done in that time. The Minister has the largest office in Whitehall, but individual Back-Bench Members are lucky if they have one and a half or two full-time staff.

Paragraph 6 goes on to say there will be

"removal as soon as practicable",

after the Home Office has made a decision on an individual case. I thought that normally there was an opportunity for a second representation if the Member of Parliament felt aggrieved at the first decision. It appears from the guidelines that that facility will be weakened, if not removed.

Paragraphs 17 and 18 go on to discuss the role of constituency Members when dealing with these matters. I have taken up many immigration cases and I freely admit that not all of them are, by any stretch of the imagination, from Islington, North. The cases may involve people from communities with which I have a special interest. They may be people who, because they are absolutely desperate, have sought me out on a Friday night, a weekend, or on a Christmas day. I have also had cases from constituencies where people do not feel able to go to their own Member of Parliament because of the known attitude of that hon. Member towards minority ethnic communities in Britain. I trust that the Minister will recognise that this service must continue.

In the guidelines we are told that copies of correspondence will be sent to the hon. Member the Home Office believes represents the immigrant concerned. How will the Home Office decide the constituency of a refugee or an asylum-seeker who has arrived at Dover western docks on a Sunday night? What ability does the Home Office have to decide that? There will be a serious invasion of individual's privacy as a result of these guidelines.

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

The record of successive British Governments on matters of immigration is not an honourable one. We discovered from the debate at Christmas and from earlier revelations that the maintenance of artificial queues for entry clearance from the Indian sub-continent was a deliberate act of immigration policy.

On 16 January in a parliamentary answer to me, the Minister of State, Home Office admitted that the waiting lists of people for entry clearance at Dhaka in September, 1985, was 12,800, at Islamabad it was 7,000 and at New Delhi it was 1600. They are variations on the figures for December 1983 and 1984, but, nevertheless, they are disgracefully long waiting lists. If the Minister says that everybody must seek entry clearance in their country of origin and still maintain the disgracefully long waiting lists, is he surpised that there is a problem at some ports of entry in Britain? The Minister must consider seriously the staffing at the high commissions and the number of entry clearance officers in Britain.

I am often closely involved with the issue of refugees and asylum-seekers. On arrival, those people are often in a desperate state. Again, the record of the British Government and, indeed, most European Governments, in respect of treatment of asylum-seekers, goes well outside the United Nations 1951 convention on the treatment of such people. Poul Hartling, the United Nations high commissioner for refugees, made a statement on 29 April 1985 in which he said:

"Negative public attitudes and in some cases xenophobic reactions have tended to focus on asylum-seekers largely because of the inadequate appreciation of their special status and needs as a group distinct from the much larger category of alien economic migrants, but also for reasons such as their limited propects for successful integration in the prevailing economic climate."

That is said within the context of the poor record of a number of European Governments in their attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers. There must be a serious debate on this issue and an examination of the record of the British and European Governments on this matter.

Last year the European refugee charter was put forward by a number of organisations and people of Europe. It makes a number of demands. The first is:

"Every refugee granted asylum by a member country of the EEC should enjoy the same rights of movement, work and political activity as nationals within the EEC."

One of the reasons why refugees and asylum seekers are badly treated throughout Europe is that they lack political rights. They have no voice and they are treated like shuttlecocks in international political manoeuvring. It is time that people understood what it is like for people arriving in Britain in a desperate state, suffering from political persecution, who then have to go through the indignity of the treatment they far too often receive from the immigration services at the ports of entry.

Those hon. Members who are keen to defend everything which the immigration service do should put themselves in that position. Last May we went through the hideous experience of the Home Office creating, peddling and refusing to recognise the way that Tamil people in Sri Lanka were being treated and the fact that they were seeking refugee status outside Sri Lanka. A visa restriction was introduced for those people. We have still not had an answer on when that visa restriction will be lifted—it was supposed to be a temporary visa restriction. Last December the Home Office did not adequately deny that it would not introduce visa requirements for those coming from Bangladesh. That resulted in many frightened people attempting to come into Britain over the Christmas period. It also led to an aggressive attitude from the immigration service towards people coming from Bangladesh.

At terminal 3 at Heathrow airport in December 1985, of the 688 people who were refused entry and removed from Britain, 140 were from Bangladesh. I dealt with a number of cases of Bengalis who had arrived over the Christmas period, and some of the questions which were put to them were absolutely disgraceful. One young man, whose case I took up with the Home Office, was asked why he wished to come to Britain over the Christmas period. He said he was coming for a holiday, to see friends of his mother's, and visit the sights of Britain. After he was unable to state a number of sights in the country that he would visit, and he admitted that he was not a Christian, he was then asked why he was coming here for the Christmas holiday. He was put through a humiliating experience and finally returned to Bangladesh, having lost money on his holiday. The only piece of Britain that he ever saw was Ashford remand centre.

A case came to my attention this Sunday of an Iraqi who has refugee status in Europe and who sought to come to Britain to celebrate the Kurdish new year at Kensington town hall on last Sunday. He was asked why he had been to see a Member of Parliament who had been to Russia and Afghanistan many times. I was that Member. I have never been to Russia or Afghanistan and I resent the way immigration officers should criticise and penalise individual arrivals in this country because they have chosen to seek assistance from an individual Member of Parliament—*[Interruption.]* There is nothing amusing about that, and I hope the Under-Secretary of State will consider this matter urgently.

If these regulations are allowed to go through they will curtail the rights of Members of Parliament to represent people, many of whom are desperate and are in danger. They are rights which must be protected.

7.39 pm

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): I have listened to most of the debate, which has been fascinating, and I have reached one conclusion — that despite Opposition criticism of the guidelines, this must still be among the easiest of all countries to get into. I entirely support people coming in for holidays or to stay with relatives, but it is totally unrealistic to allow people to buck the system and to stay permanently. It is clear to anyone with any common sense that the reason why we need the guidelines is that there are people who try to get round the system. But for those people there would be no problem.

I pay tribute to the way in which my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State handles these matters. Of all Ministers, he and his private office must be under the greatest pressure in terms of personal cases, and Members on both sides have paid tribute to him. I was sorry that the guidelines that he originally proposed were redrafted, although I recognise the pressures from various directions. Nevertheless, he may be sure that we regard the work done by him, his private office and the immigration officers as extremely valuable to both communities — those who come in and those who receive them.

It is a false assumption to think that immigration officers set out to be unduly difficult. Now and again, an officer may have had a busy day and not be so sympathetic as he was when the day began. That happens with everyone, even those who come to Members' surgeries. [HON. MEMBERS: "And the Members."] Yes, indeed. By and large, however, immigration officers deal sympathetically with people. The problem is the weight of numbers. The figures show a substantial increase in the past two years and something must be done.

The Opposition intend to divide the House. When I said in an intervention that they would be voting on the guidelines, I was told that the Division would be on the Adjournment, but that is a mere technicality. If, perchance, the Opposition won the Division, they would say that the guidelines were a dead duck and the Government would no doubt have to think twice about them. I am glad to see that the Opposition Front Bench spokesman agrees. So we shall be voting on the Minister's paper and once it is passed it will have parliamentary sanction.

The convention that we have discussed of Members not interfering in other Members' constituencies will then be established, as it were, in print. It has always been the convention that Members do not take up cases in other constituencies. If that convention were overthrown generally, for whatever reason, there would be chaos. The official Opposition do not favour proportional representation and argue, as I do, that we should retain the present system of voting and of every Member having a constituency so that constituency relationships can be retained. If Members can deal with cases in other constituencies, we may as well not bother with our special type of democracy.

The hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Bidwell), one of the most reasonable Opposition Members, surprised me when he said that he had many times taken up cases of immigrants seeking to come in from outside his constituency. The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), who is no longer present, said the same. I cannot accept that. Members are doing it for one reason—not out of sympathy but seeking to curry favour and saying to immigrants already in their constituencies, "This is what we have done not only for you but for people in other constituencies." When the Government's proposals are passed today, that kind of activity should stop.

I do not have many immigrants in my constituency, but this has happened to me. I had examined a case—anyone who knows me knows that I looked at it fairly and properly, without any rush, because I do not have many immigrants anyway—and I had decided that there was no case for that person to come in, or at any rate no case for my intervention. If the immigration officer took a different view, that was a matter for him, but I saw no case for intervention and said that I would not intervene.

Another Member of Parliament, not far away—I shall not name him as he is not present and it would be unfair—was approached, took up the case and achieved a stop. I asked the Home Office to send me a copy of the letter sent to that Member and to tell him that the copy had been sent. I then told the Member that if it happened again I would put it into the local paper that he was so enthusiastic about people coming into this country when they should not that he took up cases even in another Member's constituency. It has not happened since.

There is intense pressure from people seeking to get round the system and to come into this country.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East) *rose*——

Sir Kenneth Lewis: I will not give way as I have only 10 minutes.

It is not in the interests of immigrants already here to have a system with great leaky holes. There may be arguments between the two sides of the House as to how far immigration should go, but there is double talk. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said that of course he did not want to allow immigration to get out of hand and that there must be restraint, but then he said that the Opposition would vote against the Government's proposals. They cannot have it both ways. If we are to keep a tight hold on the number coming in, people must not be allowed to come in unlawfully through the back door by pretending to be merely visiting for a month or two.

I believe that the limit of stay should be two months rather than three months, because I believe that after three months the fare is paid by the British taxpayer. I am not altogether convinced that we should not have a visa system, although I appreciate that there are difficulties, so I shall not press that. Scarcely any other country does not have such a system. British people now need visas to get into Australia. Until we have a system of that kind, there will be problems and difficulties.

I support the guidelines and the work of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister, which I believe to be in the interests of the Asian and other communities who come here to stay with us, as well of the indigenous population.

7.49 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): I welcome the reasonable and moderate way in which the Home Secretary introduced the guidelines. He was at pains to reassure us about how they will work. However, many of us fear that the guidelines will be operated on the basis of the words as they are written down and not on the basis of the soothing comments of the right hon. Gentleman. I want to add my voice to the concern already expressed from both sides of the House about the operation of several of the guidelines.

In paragraph 6 we are told that, if a representation has not been received from the hon. Member after 12 working days, the person concerned will be removed as quickly as practicable. In the many cases which I have taken up over the past 12 years, I have usually been able to get representations in within 12 working days, but it is not always possible. There are practical difficulties. Sometimes there is a need to obtain a lot of supporting evidence. Sometimes there are language problems and difficultes in interpreting. Occasionally, if I dare say it, firms of solicitors are involved. As we all know, that slows down the whole process.

If we are to have a time scale of 12 working days, it must be operated with reasonable flexibility. It has already been pointed out that there may be practical problems of communication as well. When the Minister replies, I hope that he will assure us that at the end of the 12 days, his private office will attempt to remind the constituency Member about a case lest a communication has gone astray. It would be intolerable if people were simply removed at the end of 12 days without such a practical safeguard.

[Mr. John Cartwright]

Even more worrying is paragraph 9 of the guidelines which suggests that where the Minister has upheld an immigration decision against allowing somebody to come in, that person will have only four days after the decision before he is removed. If all went well and the Member of Parliament was in his place, ready to receive the letter, he could just about get the information to the constituent within the four-day period. There is not enough time allowed to get the views of the Minister, to give them to the constituent and to get the constituent's response. Sometimes that would be the first occasion on which the constituent would have seen the detailed arguments set out on paper. It is not reasonable to suggest this narrow four-day period after the Minister has approved the immigration officer's decision before the person concerned is removed.

On the vexed question of paragraph 17 and the role of constituency Members, I welcome what the Home Secretary said about a flexible approach; I hope that it will be flexible. The idea of the Minister's civil servants in the private office checking constituency boundaries to try to work out whether a Member of Parliament really had a right to raise a case is a frightening prospect. As my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) pointed out, many of the people involved have relations in different constituencies. The implication of the paragraph as it is written is that where the hon. Member is sick or absent, there has to be a formal arrangement for another hon. Member to take up the case on his behalf. I find that hard to accept in the real world. Members of Parliament do not tend to write each other formal letters saying, "Please take up my cases while I am absent or sick." In the real world arrangements are much more flexible and reasonable.

In my borough of Greenwich in south-east London there are three Members of Parliament, all from different political parties. We have a good working relationship on these issues. The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Barnett) and the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) are clearly more efficient than I am because they manage to close their offices during the month of August. My office keeps going, which means that I get all the immigration problems during August and I take them up on behalf of my parliamentary colleagues. Often there are problems at weekends. If someone wants advice in an urgent case on a Friday night, there is no time to send him off chasing another Member. I raise the matter, I inform my parliamentary colleague and I make it clear to the Minister that I am raising the case on behalf of another Member of Parliament. I give the Member the opportunity to take up the case, if he wishes. Therefore, there has to be flexibility in the operation of that rule.

I must also underline what other hon. Members have said about cases which the constituency Member directly involved is not prepared to take up. Occasionally, cases are brought to me by a constituent who is a distant relative of the person concerned and who is not the primary sponsor. When I ask why his brother, cousin or uncle in another part of the country has not taken up the case, I am told that his constituency Member will not get involved. Sometimes when I check that out, I find that that is fact. I make no apology for taking up such cases. If I have even a tenuous constituency link, I think that it is right that I should do that.

I am also concerned about paragraph 19 and about prior advice to travellers emanating from hon. Members. It is suggested that an adverse view will be applied only where the Member of Parliament is

"fully aware that a passenger is most unlikely to be admitted under the Rules".

That seems to imply a subjective judgment on the part of the immigration officer, the Minister or the Minister's civil servants about what was in the mind of the hon. Member when he took the action. That is a difficult thing for anyone to attempt to do.

My experience is that people come to me and say, "My relation is coming for a family wedding. It is a very expensive journey. There is a lot of money invested in this trip and we do not want to discover when he arrives on Friday night that he will be sent back on Saturday morning. Can you please help us before he sets out?" I am sure I do the same as other hon. Members. I advise that the person should bring every possible shred of evidence which will convince the immigration officer that he intends to go home at the end of his stay. I also point out that if there are problems the person can contact me. I make no apology for that. In most such cases, people come through the immigration system with no difficulty. Therefore, again, there must be a much more flexible attitude than is suggested by the guidelines.

My experience of a great many problems experienced by visitors seeking temporary admission is that the private office is usually helpful. Most visitors seek permission to stay one month or two. The intervention of a Member of Parliament usually means that visitors get two or three months. When the Minister's letter refusing admission is finally received, many have already gone home. They have made a voluntary departure. Many others go rapidly after the Minister's decision. Having asked for one month, one or two want to stay for six months. I tell them clearly that that is not possible.

I have had two cases of absconders that I am aware of, both in the same month and from the same source. I regret those very much. I am sorry that they managed to evade immigration control but I am much more concerned about the hundreds of decent, honest people who would not have been allowed to attend family weddings and visit their relatives in this country had it not been for my intervention. That alone justifies the involvement of Members of Parliament in such cases.

I pay tribute to the Minister for the helpful view he has shown in cases of permanent settlement in my constituency. In compassionate cases and political asylum cases he has been very helpful. But he upholds every decision of the immigration officers in relation to those coming here for visits. Since many have gone by the time he tells me that they cannot come in, it seems to me that he is accepting too glibly the views of the immigration officers.

Unlike other hon. Members who have spoken from the Opposition side of the House, I think that there is a case for having guidelines. It is a good thing for hon. Members to know exactly what their powers are and how they can be operated. It is better to have them clearly written down than to have to learn the system on the job. But the guidelines must be fair, reasonable, practical and as simple as possible. Certainly they must not fetter the rights of hon. Members. The power of Members to involve themselves in the operation of immigration control is a vital part of the job of a Member of Parliament in

monitoring the operation of the Executive. The guidelines, even in their revised form, could undermine that very important monitoring job. That is why I shall vote against the motion tonight.

7.59 pm

Mr. John Whitfield (Dewsbury): I wish to concentrate on the fact that the provision in the original draft for hon. Members to contact immigration officials has now — unfortunately, in my view — been withdrawn. The immigration officer is at the centre of this issue. Under section 4 of the Immigration Act he has the statutory power to admit or to refuse entry.

Like many of my hon. Friends I was appalled at the passage in the speech of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) when he said that the immigration officers were prejudiced, suspicious and paranoid. Such language would be appalling on any occasion. To apply it to the immigration service, which I have much experience of dealing with, is not only totally inaccurate but deeply insulting. The right hon. Gentleman was invited to withdraw his remarks, but a few minutes ago he refused to do so. If he had applied those epithets to some of the views of his hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) they might have been more appropriate. That lady made an impassioned speech.

Mr. Sheerman: It was a good speech.

Mr. Whitfield: It was a good speech, but it was a prejudiced, suspicious and paranoid speech. Many hon. Members on the Opposition Benches practise in the racial discrimination industry. They resort to such speeches to inflame racial passions. It is no surprise to me that, apparently, so many of the hon. Lady's constituents are worried in advance about whether their relations will be allowed to come to this country. The hon. Lady is frightening them. She is putting fear and paranoia into their minds by using such language.

There has been an increase in the size of the problem. That is why we are debating the issue. There has been an enormous increase in the number of visitors to this country and a corresponding increase in the number of people legitimately stopped at the ports of entry by the immigration officers.

Mr. Nellist: How big an increase?

Mr. Whitfield: We are concerned this evening about whether those who arrive at the ports of entry are visitors. Opposition Members seem to suggest that when anyone arrives at the port of entry and claims to be a visitor, that claim must be accepted at its face value. That attitude is nonsense. It is the difficult job of the immigration officers to interview people. There are three or four grades of interview — hon. Members who have inspected the system will understand how it works—and only a very small percentage—less than 2 per cent.—are stopped. They are stopped because the officers genuinely believe that they are not visitors but are trying to enter the country for some other purpose.

The stop power that hon. Members have brings with it a great deal of responsibility. It is not to be likened to our general duties as hon. Members to represent the interests of our constituents in dealing with local government and Government Departments. We have a power to interfere with the statutory power of the immigration officers. That power must be exercised in a quasi-judicial way and with responsibility. It is not simply a privilege. I cannot think of a better way of responsibly exercising that power than by speaking to the immigration officer who has dealt with the case and who will read out the notes in the file. One could then make a decision as to whether one should exercise the power to prevent removal.

The guidelines state quite clearly that the Minister of State will intervene to overrule the decision of the immigration officer only if he is aware of "new and compelling" evidence for overruling that decision. There has been little reference to that part of the guidelines. How can the Minister of State exercise his discretion if the representations made to him by the hon. Member concerned do not take into account the reasons why the immigration officer made his decision in the first place? The Minister of State cannot direct his mind to the question whether there are "new and compelling" reasons unless he focuses on that point. Hon. Members have a duty to consider that point before deciding whether to make representations to the Minister of State and, indeed, before deciding whether to intervene and place a stop on removal.

I was very surprised to hear some of my hon. Friends, as well as Opposition Members, objecting to contacting the ports. I understand that some hon. Members have said that that would impose too much of a burden on them. That is an extraordinary statement. If they had argued that too great a burden would have been placed on the immigration officers—who have many other things to do—one could have understood the argument, but for an hon. Member of whatever political persuasion to complain of the burden of having to ring the port of entry seems extraordinary.

It is also extraordinary that some hon. Members would apparently wish to put a stop on cases whatever the facts might be. Those who take such an attitude seem to be in danger of seeking power without responsibility and wishing to intervene blindly in cases without any reference to the facts.

We operate our system of immigration control instead of a visa system. Many of my hon. Friends would prefer a visa system. There are difficulties connected with such a system. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Sir K. Lewis) said, this country must be one of the easiest in the world to gain entry to. When we are dealing with visitors or potential immigrants from the Asian sub-continent we must remember that the rules that apply to those going the other way are totally different from those that operate here. I am sure that the Pakistani and Indian Moslem communities in my own constituency would not themselves wish the system to be made any easier that it already is.

Mr. Sheerman: Do they want to make it harder?

Mr. Whitfield: No. They wish the system to operate in a responsible and restrictive manner, because that is what immigration control is about. They would deplore some of the remarks that have been made by Opposition Members about the immigration service.

I seriously request my hon. and learned Friend carefully to consider reviewing the rules within a short time. I suspect that, without the requirement on hon. Members to ring the immigration officers at the port of entry and find out the reasons for the initial decision, the number of stops and representations that have brought the present system so near to collapse will continue to increase.

8.8 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Tonight's debate clearly arises from the Home Office's attempt to restrict the right of Members of Parliament to challenge refusals at the ports of entry of people who wish to visit Britain. As previous speakers have made clear, and as the press has reported in the past 10 days, the original document issued by the Minister of State was changed before tonight's debate. That is not so much a U-turn as an S-bend which has been imposed on the Minister by his foreman, the Secretary of State. But the restrictions that are left will create serious difficulties and injustices for the relatives of the people in Coventry and other towns and cities who are affected by the Government's immigration controls.

We have heard from the speeches of Tory Members, that have been prefaced in remarks made outside the House and in newspaper articles, that it is all a question of numbers. That is a game that Tories love to play. It was started by the Prime Minister in 1978 in her famous television interview when she talked about Britain possibly being swamped by people of an alien culture. Some Tory Members go rapidly downhill when they carry on from those remarks.

What are the numbers under consideration? Let us start with an analysis of the people who are affected by the Home Office guidelines. The latest figures are from 1984 when a total of some 7·7 million visitors came to Britain. That is an average of 21,000 people a day. The number of visitors who were refused entry was 17,355, or 50 people a day. The number of people who sought assistance from a Member of Parliament was 3,532, or 10 people a day.

Tory Members justified the new guidelines by saying that since 1984 there has been an enormous increase in the number of cases taken up by Members of Parliament, which is putting such a strain on the limited resources of the Home Office that it is necessary to restrict the rights of the Members of Parliament. Well, I have the figures for 1985. The number of cases in which Members of Parliament made representations to the Minister of State, Home Office, was 5,694—in other words, 15 cases a day. If the Home Office cannot handle 15 cases a day—people who may have invested their life savings to come for a once-in-a-lifetime visit to see a distant family—it is not for the Minister to restrict the rights of Members of Parliament. Why has he not considered an increase in staff in his office or the ancillary departments within the Home Office in order to deal with that huge increase in work of an extra five cases a day?

Incidentally, while we are playing the numbers game, I notice that virtually no Conservative Member has let slip that there happen to be 200 million people or more who could arrive here tomorrow morning as visitors without the Minister of State being able to do a thing about it. Under the much-loved treaty of Rome, under which the Tories took us into the Common Market some 15 years ago, that is the number of people who, with the free movement of capital and labour and all the rest of the phrases which justified our entry into that big business club, could arrive here without restrictions similar to those that we are discussing tonight.

The difference is that visitors from the EEC will still be tourists, like the relatives of my constituents on whose behalf I have made representations to the Minister of State, but they will be spending deutschmarks, not rupees. Visitors who come from north America will be spending dollars and not rupees. When the Government, and those Tory Members who have spoken so far tonight, say that those Labour Members who have spoken are somehow accusing the Government of a racist attitude, there is an element of that. The statistics show that those who have been refused entry to Britain from the Asian sub-continent —India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and so on—are 44 times more likely to be refused entry at a port of entry than someone who comes from north America.

The second theme in the debate is an attempt by the Minister and the Government to reverse the concept of justice which is supposed to operate in Britain. I shall not digress into what has happened recently in Wapping and during the miners' strike to show what justice in Britain really means, but I shall say that the guidelines turn the concept of innocent until proved guilty on its head. Every schoolchild in Britain is taught that, under the British system of justice, a person is innocent until proved guilty. The Government are trying to change that concept in a number of ways.

I am a member of the Committee which is considering the Wages Bill which gives power to an employer who thinks that somebody has stolen some money from the till to declare that person a thief, deduct the money that has been stolen from his wages and then to offer the person the right to go to an industrial tribunal to prove his innocence —guilty until proven innocent. There is an element of that in the guidelines that we are considering tonight.

The entry clearance officer will decide that somebody who seeks to come into Britain as a visitor is guilty of breaking one of the rules and that person will be told to prove his innocence from 10,000 miles away unless a Member of Parliament can intervene on his behalf, asking for a review of the case by the Minister of State acting on behalf of the Secretary of State. I would prefer the Bill that was proposed yesterday by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), of which I am a sponsor, which gives people the right to appeal in Britain. The rules boil down to the fact that an entry clearance officer can declare that somebody is guilty and the only chance of proving that person's innocence is if a Member of Parliament intervenes.

Again today, Tory Members have said that there are widespread abuses and misuses of the system. I have yet to hear a concrete illustration to back up that argument, but in all the cases that I have handled since I came to the House in 1983 where an entry clearance officer has told a relative or a friend of one of my constituents that he is not a genuine visitor to Britain and that he will have to go back, not one person has absconded.

In several cases I have made representations on behalf of a visitor who might be asking for, say, a three-month holiday, and it has taken the Home Office four months to review the case. I have had to apply pressure to get the person's passport back so that he can leave after his three-month holiday to go home. Before the Home Office can work out whether a person who has been accused of not being a genuine visitor is a genuine visitor, that person has had his genuine holiday and is trying to return home.

It often takes three or four months to work through such cases. The checking of statements is a detailed business which requires cross-checking of all the questions asked. It takes the Home Office, with all its resources, reference books, legal expertise and staff three or four months and

sometimes more to deal with such matters. Yet Members of Parliament are asked to complete a similar exercise. That was initially to be carried out in 10 days, but as a concession we have now been allowed 12 days in which to build up a quasi-legal argument against the Home Office, with all the resources that it has to defend its position.

The hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) referred to the idea that Members of Parliament are willingly going around the country collecting the cases of other Members of Parliament. That is a fatuous suggestion. The Labour party proposes a 35-hour week, but there are times when I think that we should bring in a 35-hour day so that I can at least have a couple of hours off. The work load of a Labour Member of Parliament, particularly in an inner-city area with getting on for 50 per cent. unemployment, makes that a ludicrous suggestion.

But it does happen that Tory Members will capriciously refuse to take up a family's case and the only alternative is to find a more sympathetic Member of Parliament to act on that family's behalf.

Mr. Wheeler: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Nellist: I shall give way in a moment.

One such case has come to light as a result of discussions with my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). An Egyptian man was an overstayer who had, like many others, breached immigration control, through a combination of ignorance and carelessness. He asked the hon. Member for Westminster, North to intervene with the Home Office. He was told that he would have to exercise his right of appeal from abroad. The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants managed to get in touch with my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North. He took up the case with the Minister and asked him to exercise his discretion, because the man had had a long-term relationship with a British woman. The Minister exercised his discretion in favour of that Egyptian man, and that couple are now happily married and in this country. But if it was left to some Tory Members, that appeal could have been made only from thousands of miles away and would have caused great distress and unhappiness to those people.

Another important restriction, the 12-day rule, is to be found in paragraph 3. But what would happen if my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Park) was on holiday, and if I and my secretary came down with flu after agreeing to cover his immigration cases? In such circumstances, how could a Member of Parliament compete with Home Office staff, who can cover for one another? The Member of Parliament would have to sift through all the arguments and the extraneous and often irrelevant questions of entry clearance officers, along with the relevant points of law.

Paragraph 19 amazes me, because the Minister has seriously put forward the idea that knowledge of one's rights under the law is prejudicial to exercising them. That is what paragraph 19 would, in effect, mean. What other section of British law means that knowledge of one's rights under it is prejudicial to exercising them?

I turn to the theme underlying the rules and the Government's attitude towards Asian workers and immigration in general. That provides, after all, the backdrop to this debate. It is ironic that, with the active participation and support of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), the Tory Government toured the world in the 1950s and 1960s asking people to come to Britain, because it was short of labour. It was a bit of an illusion, but they said that we had a booming economy and needed people to work in our factories.

When that illusion petered out in the 1970s and 1980s, those same Tory politicians, backed by their friends in the media, began to encourage working people, and particularly those suffering from the deteriorating economy — the unemployed, the elderly and those in receipt of supplementary benefit — to see immigration and those of a different colour skin as the cause of their problems.

Such talk increases and fuels the conditions in which racism, Fascism and organisations such as the neo-Nazi National Front breed. Immigrants, and their relatives and friends who wish to visit them, are not the cause of bad housing, deteriorating living standards or high unemployment. Black and Asian workers, particularly the young, often suffer the most from such conditions. We have a Tory capitalist system that is willingly presided over by a Tory capitalist Government who cannot deliver the goods. That is why there is mass unemployment. It is nothing to do with the number of black or Asian workers in Britain.

These rules and restrictions on the right of Members of Parliament adequately to defend their constituents' relatives and friends, or the rights of passengers and visitors to this country, are based on the same prejudice and racism that are at the root of much of Tory legislation on this issue and, unfortunately, of previous Labour legislation. That legislation is discriminatory and racist in its operation. It causes hardship and suffering. I look forward to the day when we have a Labour Government who will sweep away all such legislation to where it really belongs—in the dustbin of history.

8.24 pm

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): There is a large ethnic minority of Asian origin in my constituency, and I have made many representations to the Home Office since the election of June 1983. I came with some trepidation to hear whether I was one of the 23. But, like the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Bidwell), I escaped.

My experience of dealing with representations is in some respects very similar to that of the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist). I have seen all those who have been refused entry, with their sponsors, and in practically every case I think that they have returned home more or less at the end of the stated period. I share the feeling that many people of modest means who have paid a lot of money to come here would have forfeited it but for the system, with all its faults.

Like the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall, I attach great importance to the sponsor. Unlike many hon. Members I regard the sponsor as the constituent on whose behalf I am acting. The visitor is not strictly speaking a constituent. The sponsor's position is extremely important. Often, he has paid for the visit, or he has certainly contributed to it. He normally provides the visitor's food and accommodation. I do not accept the view that Members of Parliament who make representations in such cases are acting in a quasi-judicial capacity. I am not sure whether my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) meant that. I think that he really

[Mr. Patrick Ground]

meant that Members of Parliament should show judgment in making representations to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister.

I believe that a Member of Parliament exercises his judgment when making representations if he is satisfied, as far as he can be from the representations made to him by the sponsor and the visitor, that the latter will return at the end of his short stay. The sponsor is essential at interviews, because the visitor often cannot speak English well enough to conduct a detailed conversation. It is the sponsor who greatly influences one's confidence as to whether the visitor will return.

I have found sponsors to be generally reliable and responsible, and concerned, in the interests of their good reputation and understanding, to ensure that such undertakings are honoured. When anything has gone wrong, they have felt considerable responsibility for it. As the Member of Parliament often needs to see the constituent or sponsor, I believe that the time limits in the guidelines are a cause for some anxiety. Plainly, it is difficult in many cases to arrange a surgery appointment and see people concerned within the time limit.

I am convinced that some flexibility and good sense must be shown by the Home Office—I am sure that it will be—to cover the situation where a Member of Parliament has been unable to arrange an appointment in sufficient time to make representations within the time limit for reasons of time, pressure of work, holidays or whatever. Certainly, for those hon. Members who make a large number of representations, it is no laughing matter to be tied to a rigid rule.

I am content that it should be a guideline and I am confident that it will be treated accordingly, with the understanding which has been shown, in my experience, by the Office of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State. I should like to join those hon. Members who have complimented the staff on the courtesy, patience and competence they have shown in administering an extremely difficult system.

I do not believe that the reasons for the increase in immigration cases—or visitor cases representations more accurately—is due to any change in the habits of hon. Members. I believe that the Asian community is now becoming more settled, established, confident and economically prosperous, and Asians have enormous numbers of poorer relatives whom they wish to invite to this country. With the cheapening of air travel and the increasing habit of travel in the Third world, there is bound to be an even greater increase in the future in the number of visitors coming to visit members of the Asian community here. I think that the Home Office must face up to that prospect and discover how it will deal with it.

One area of improvement was suggested in the speech of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer). He suggested that some guidance or instruction could be given to immigration officers so that, where there has been an application for permanent settlement and some blatant lie or exaggeration told in the interview, they do not automatically refuse entry. Perhaps they do not. However, there is a pattern to cases, and it appears that even in cases of minor dishonesty or vanity, refusal is the result. Many of the people concerned have simply exaggerated their worldly goods or income for reasons which are perfectly understandable when they come from a village in India to a vast modern airport in what must seem to be a relatively prosperous country. They naturally want to exaggerate their position. That is perfectly understandable and will no doubt continue. That should not be a reason for refusing entry to a visitor.

Similarly, many of them forget some relative whom they choose to forget and fail to mention to the immigration officer in the family tree interrogation. I do not want to be critical because I think that the decisions of the immigration officers, on the whole, are perfectly understandable when they see the people before them. I can well understand how the decisions are arrived at. However, I think that in the future there is room for the immigration officers' attention to be attracted to the real question of whether the visitors are likely to go home at the end of their stay, not whether they have told fibs or varying sorts of exaggerations in the process.

I am concerned that when potential visitors to this country go to Foreign Office establishments abroad and say that they want to visit this country they are told that there is no need for visas or any form of documentation. Those same people, when they arrive in this country, can be subjected to the immigration procedure, told that their reasons are not genuine and that they should return straight away, when they or their relatives have spent vast amounts of money to come here.

I share the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) that we should look at a visa system. If India and the United States can administer visas surely it is not beyond the bounds of the competence of the Foreign Office to do likewise. That would take out much of the unfairness and administrative hassle of the present system. Similarly, the question of guarantees should be looked at further to see whether that is a short cut to a solution to the problems we are experiencing.

In all the discussions on guidelines we must not lose sight of the fact that we are really considering a safety valve which prevents a great deal of human misery, unhappiness and loss of resources. We are doing so in a context which ensures that the visitor system is basically honoured. I agree that we are talking not about immigration but about visitors. I also agree that if visitors can come and go with reasonable freedom and generosity of treatment, that helps to make the strict rules on immigration much more acceptable in the community. I think that that must be borne in mind when the Government are fixing time limits for removing people. They should err in favour of giving them the few weeks or months for which they normally come.

I view the guidelines with some anxiety but I have come to the conclusion that they will work if they are interpreted and followed with the good sense and flexibility which, on the whole, has been the practice of the Home Office in these matters, and with the continuing courtesy, efficiency and skill of the staff who administer them. Therefore, I shall support the guidelines, but I think that for the future the possibilities of a review of procedure should be borne constantly in mind by the Home Office. The guidelines in themselves will not reduce the problem of numbers and the massive scale of administration will remain and should be tackled before the machine is over-encumbered as it has been in recent months.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Opposition Front Bench will try to catch my eye at 9.10 pm. On behalf of those hon. Members who still wish to speak, many of whom have strong constituency interests and have been here all afternoon, I appeal for even more brevity.

8.38 pm

Mr. George Park (Coventry, North-East): I want to add my tribute to the Minister's staff. However, in my opinion, the words on the Order Paper are not correct. We are not discussing immigration cases today. We are discussing the difficulties experienced by visitors from the Indian sub-continent and the attempts by the Home Office, in issuing guidelines, to constrain the attempts of hon. Members to get the same treatment for those with brown skins and a working class background as that given to those visitors who have white skins.

If we were to accept the proposed guidelines, they would establish a dangerous precedent which would undoubtedly be used by other Government Departments. Since 1974 I have encountered only one case out of many hundreds where an individual sought to evade the immigration laws. Unlike some Conservative Members, I have not experienced floods of people coming into the country as visitors and then trying to disappear.

Frequently, however, very temporary admission is granted, sometimes of only three days' duration, for the flimsiest of reasons, in cases where the sponsors, my constituents, who are known to me, are sincerely prepared to guarantee that the visitor will return at the end of his visit. I can confirm the experience of my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), in that I am often asked to provide a letter, which might help to expedite the passage of people's relatives through immigration, because, as my right hon. Friend said, they expect trouble. That should not be so.

At a meeting with the Minister of State, because of arguments about what is actually said at interviews, it was suggested that the interviews should be taped. Those who were in the delegation were then faced with estimates of the cost, which suggested that the estimaters were setting up a studio for "Panorama".

It has been suggested by the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) that if only everyone told the truth, there would be no problems. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman is in his place. But sometimes the truth is not enough. During the period of office of the Labour Government—therefore, I shall not be accused of bias—I had a case to deal with of a lady seeking a visa being asked for details of her family, who, she said, were at home, but she could not bring them to the High Commission. The problem was solved only when the then Minister visited her village. The Minister was the husband of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short). He discovered that the men in that family were woodworkers, and had carved the family tree in the wooden mantlepiece around the fireplace. So the lady did have the family tree details, but obviously could not bring them to the High Commission. Therefore, honesty and truth are not always sufficient.

The proposed guidelines are not helpful, and I do not think that they are intended to be. However, what would help is a requirement that all visitors to Britain be treated in the same way.

8.42 pm

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): It is important that there should be a balanced view. This evening, we have heard of three plus points. The draft rules will be subject to further revision if that is found necessary. That is essential. We have the code of practice and, furthermore, the 52 extra staff to do the additional jobs.

I also pay tribute to the Minister for the work that has been done over the past years. Some 25 per cent. of my electorate comes from abroad. Like the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Bidwell) I have a certain amount of experience in this line.

I should like the Minister to clarify one point for me. The total number refused entry in 1984 was 17,355. The number of refused passengers who were represented by Members of Parliament was 3,532. That figure increased in 1985, as we have been told today, to a total of 5,694, and it escalated to 7,000 in 1986 on an annual basis. However, unhappily, we do not have the figures on the other side for the total refused entry during 1985 and 1986. I feel that they are rising in direct proportion. Some people are lucky to have Members of Parliament who can intervene on their behalf. The Minister will remember an intervention that I made. I was successful in getting an immigrant put on a dialysis machine. If I had not succeeded, he would have died. That is one of the things a Member of Parliament can do for his constituents.

Who should take up cases? That matter is referred to in paragraph 17 of the guidelines. I say that it is the responsibility of the local Member of Parliament. That is determined by where the sponsor lives. It must have occurred to hon. Members that if the sponsor is changed, with the consent of the Minister, another Member of Parliament can be invited to intervene. For example, the sponsor might live in Bedford, but his local Member might be away on extended leave and thus not be able to act. He or the family could go along to the private office or the Department and ask for another sponsor to be appointed with a fixed address to which the person could go. In that case, that Member of Parliament could intervene. Therefore, my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Sir K. Lewis) was right to suggest that it must be the local Member of Parliament who deals with those cases, since otherwise there will be some interesting but tumultuous changes.

When the draft rules came out, I read them most carefully and came to the conclusion that it would assist Members of Parliament if we could refer to the port of entry first. In fact, I have done that on several occasions. I always interview immigrants when they come from abroad. I cross-examine them and come to my own conclusion. Where I cannot make the ends meet, I may consult the port and get additional guidance. Those at the port might say to me, "We have much more information on this case than you could possibly get. If you will take into account this additional information, you may come to the conclusion that we have reached." I would not necessarily be persuaded by it, but such guidance is extremely useful in reaching a conclusion.

I hope that when the Minister reconsiders the matter, generally he will remove or revise some things to which we have not referred today, such as the primary purpose rule. That is causing much more confusion than anything

[Sir Trevor Skeet]

else to my constituents and those who are coming in. However, as it does not arise directly out of the debate, I shall leave that aside.

Paragraph 2 of the guidelines states:

"the Minister will not normally intervene to overturn the decision of an immigration officer unless he considers that there is new and compelling evidence which was not available to the immigration officer."

It occurs to me that compassionate factors may well be new. They may not come up at the time. That may be an additional point. Immigration is inclined to overlook the cost for the immigrant of coming in. The sum of £500 or £600 is large. I pray in aid the fact that of the people who have been represented by Members of Parliament, who have done so remarkably well, only 2 per cent. have absconded, gone to ground or been lost on the way, which is a trifling figure. I have had long experience, exactly the same as the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Bidwell). He has had a low percentage, too. If the immigration officers are so concerned with the build-up of cases, and they make mistakes, the advantageous influence of the Member of Parliament must be maintained.

8.48 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): I apologise for not having been present at the beginning of the debate. I was engaged on Select Committee business.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), referred to an article in the *Daily Telegraph*, which gave the league table of hon. Members who had dealt with cases at terminal 3. I gather from that that I am number four, so only three hon. Members have dealt with more cases than me. However, despite that, I was not on the Minister of State's list of hon. Members who had, as he put it, abused the regulations. If I have dealt with all those cases and have not committed any abuse, that must give me some status in this debate. Not having committed any abuse, I feel very sore, annoyed, and angry about the situation. Perhaps the Minister also feels sore and angry about the job that he has to do.

Ms. Clare Short: He should resign.

Mr. Leighton: Yes, the Minister could resign. I am told that only about 1 per cent. of the travellers who pass through terminal 3 at Heathrow are stopped. I sometimes think that all those people must come from the London borough of Newham. That is how it seems to me. I feel like an extension of the Home Office and I resent that. I resent the work that I have to do and the hours that I spend feeling like an extension of the Home Office. The Home Office should give me a member of staff, a civil servant who would sit in my office. Instead of my ringing up a civil servant, why should I not have a civil servant to do all the work that the Minister of State causes me through the current system?

I should like that point of view to be taken seriously. I sometimes think that I speak to the Minister's private office—to which I pay tribute—more than the Minister does. If my having a member of staff who is a civil servant is not a good arrangement, perhaps the Minister of State could use his influence with his colleagues to give me an extra allowance. I could then employ—as I have to—one person simply to deal with the problems faced by visitors entering through the airport.

I suspect that some form of instruction has been issued to the effect that when in doubt, say no. The visitor will go to a Member of Parliament who will take up the matter and if there is a problem, the Member of Parliament will make representations and have everything put right. I cannot think of any other explanation for the present situation.

Anyone who wants to visit this country ought to be allowed to do so. Why should they not be allowed to do that, especially if they have relatives in this country? Hon. Members know, and I know from experience in my constituency, that numerous people are unreasonably refused entry. I stress unreasonable. The proof of that lies in the constant correspondence that I have with the Minister of State and he must get fed up with that. In his replies, he says that he has carefully considered my representations but on balance, having given great consideration to the matter, he concludes that he must uphold the immigration officer. That means that the relative of my constituent who wanted a two-month visit has had a three-month visit while the Minister has been considering my representations. Therefore, the Minister of State sadly authorises the departure of my visitor. I must then write another letter and have my special employee write to say that the Minister of State has turned my visitor down but he has had his three-month stay. That must prove that my visitor was a genuine visitor and that the immigration officer had it wrong. The vast majority of the cases that I deal with are dealt with on that basis. I resent the repetitive work that I have to do which involves dozens of cases every month.

I shall consider only paragraph 19 in the guidelines. That paragraph concerns hon. Members advising people to travel. I have people coming to me saying that they have relatives coming to this country. I tell them that this is a free country and that they can come here for a visit. However, my constituents say that they expect trouble as all their friends have had trouble. I tell them that if it is a reasonable case they should have no problems and that their relatives should be allowed entry. My constituents are not satisfied and say that they have spent hundreds of pounds and they want to know where I will be on a Sunday morning in four weeks' time in case of difficulty. I have to tell them that I do not know. They then want to know where I will be at 3 o'clock in the morning, and I tell them that, with a bit of luck, I will be in bed. My constituents are worried and they ask me to write them a letter. Now, I do not do that very often, but I have written a letter to whom it may concern to vouch that a visitor is genuine. I do not know if that was the wrong thing to do, and I trust that the Minister of State will clarify that for me.

When I make representations, what case am I supposed to answer when I am told that a person is not a genuine visitor? I do not know what has happened in the interview at the airport and I do not know why the immigration officer has turned the entrant down. What I do know is that there have been umpteen cases when the immigration officer has been wrong. Why can I not have some account of the interview, and know why the immigration officer has said that the visitor is bogus or wrong? I would then know what case there was to answer. I hope that the Minister of State can comment on that.

Mr. Bob Edwards (Wolverhampton South-East): I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) is aware that I have

two visitors in my constituency who came to this country to attend weddings and meet relatives. One of those visitors has been in detention for four weeks at public expense and the other for three weeks. I cannot get any reply or justification for that state of affairs from the Home Office.

Mr. Leighton: That sort of situation causes terrible aggravation and hardship for individuals and aggravation for Members of Parliament. It disgraces this country and it is uncivilised and barbarous. There should be more immigration officers to deal with these matters, and the Home Office must make some changes. We cannot carry on in the present way and I ask the Minister of State if I may have an extra worker from the Home Office to work for me to deal with the problems caused in my constituency by the Minister's Department.

8.58 pm

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): I would like to join in the warm tributes that have been paid this afternoon to the Minister of State and his staff. I would also like to welcome the guidelines, for the benefit that they accord not just to ourselves as hon. Members, but to the bulk of the minority communities who wish to abide by our laws and who wish to dissociate themselves from the malpractice that clearly exists.

The guidelines are needed as a protection for the basic tolerance and good nature of this country. Sustaining that tolerance and preserving our tradition of sanctuary must not be undermined by the activities of the few hon. Members and those outside the House whose motives are, to put it mildly, somewhat questionable and give cause for concern.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) said earlier that we do not prevent people coming to this country from the United States. He is absolutely correct. If a visitor comes from New York, whether he is white, Hispanic or coal-black, we hand him back his American passport and say, "Have a nice day." We do that because there is no inward pressure for settlement from the United States and that is why it is wrong for the hon. Member to argue in that manner. We discussed that pressure in May of last year and that was challenged by Opposition Members and there was talk of the repeal of legislation. We heard that talk again today. There could be nothing more damaging to existing and future good community relationships than the dismantling of existing controls.

In the May debate, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) spoke of only a handful of thousands awaiting the right of settlement. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman read the article in *The Sunday Times* last week about a group of entry clearance officers. The article was entitled

"The little white ghetto of Gulshan".

A queue of 11,600 people were awaiting clearance. This week, the Select Committee on Home Affairs was told that there were 30,000 dependants of Bangladeshis living in Tower Hamlets seeking admission. If that is a handful of thousands, it is a very big handful. Refugees and those seeking asylum are one thing, but people merely wanting to live here are entirely different. Because of these pressures, I believe that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is right to bring in these guidelines as a means of helping the peaceful integration of those minority groups who are already here and recognise the dangers of further inward pressure for settlement.

Last time I made these remarks, I received letters from what I called the Nottingham race relations industry. They were very instructive. They make my points for me. For example, the Transport and General Workers Union referred to "poisonous comments"; the National Union of Teachers said that my remarks were "ill-informed and potentially inflammatory"; the Inland Revenue Staff Federation spoke of "scant regard for people involved with the problem"; the Communist party of Great Britain referred to a "serious slur"; the Nottingham Inter-Union Race Relations Group said "inept and dismissive"; and the Pakistan Friends League spoke of

"thousands of black people facing burocratic obstruction. We seek a more positive and generous"

and so on. The prospective parliamentary candidate for the Labour party in my seat of Nottingham, South, referring to the rights of black people to live in this country, asked:

"Where was the evidence of pressure to immigrate."

If he and those other correspondents cannot see that evidence, they are either blind to the problem or do not, for whatever reason, want to see it.

I believe that, in the context of what we seek to achieve, these are reasonable guidelines. However, I am a little disappointed that there is no reference in them to encouraging — I asked for no more than that — hon. Members to check with immigration officers before making representations. If an hon. Member has made an inquiry and is satisfied that there is a reasonable case to put to the Minister, I am sure that he will put the case to the Minister. If the information that the hon. Member receives does not lead him to feel that there is a case to put, it is reasonable for him to tell the Home Office that he does not intend to make representations. There is no doubt in my mind or in the minds of many other hon. Members that the shopping around technique applies.

Stabilo Boss is a marvellous modern invention because it isolates the nub of paragraph 19. I marked out the words

"If there is clear evidence that a Member . . . advises him to travel without entry clearance on the presumption that . . .he will gain access . . . on temporary admission . . . then temporary admission will not readily be granted."

Paragraph 19 does not seek to avoid the kind of guidance an hon Member can give to his constituents—for example, the letters of identification to which many hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler), have referred and which I have given to relatives of people when I have known the family background and have been satisfied that the intended visitor would be a visitor and that production of a letter would avoid embarrassment at the port of entry.

In short, if these guidelines allow hon. Members to act fairly and justly on behalf of their constituents—I agree that our constituents are the sponsors, not the visitors—they are right and should work. The original draft contained one phrase, which relates to paragraph 19, to the effect that we must not allow temporary admission to be used as a device. I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House have been embarrassed to find that temporary admission had been used as a device, even by people whom they thought they knew. If we give the guidelines a chance, if we try to make them as public as we can among the communities in which we deal day by day and if we take them in the spirit of good faith intended by Ministers, these problems will rapidly diminish.

9.4 pm

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): I apologise Mr. Speaker, for not being here at the beginning of the debate, but I wrote to you explaining the reason.

My concern here is that these guidelines seem to be setting the convenience of Ministers and immigration officials above the rights of hon. Members. Justice is being lost and the rights of Members' constituents are being denied. The person who is held may very well not be a constituent, but his relations who intervene and are the sponsors are our constituents. In these days when people hark back to Victorian values, it should be remembered that the Victorians gave some weight to the family and family life. This is of no less importance for an Indian or Pakistani than for a Britisher with a white skin.

My concern about these guidelines is, above all, that I know from the Asian community in my constituency how they are being interpreted. One person in Bolton said to me—he was not criticising—that it is rather tragic that Her Majesty is working so hard to cement the Commonwealth and the rules and regulations that the Government are producing seem to be dividing rather than uniting.

I would say to the Minister that if there is all this burden of work on his Department there is a simple solution. He admits, when questioned, that the people who come in to visit their relations in virtually every case abide by the agreement to leave the country. Why is it, if these people are such a danger, that when an hon Member intervenes they are allowed to be released and they leave at the time stated? Why, then, should they be detained in the first place? It does not happen to South Africans or Americans, and as they are leaving and are merely visitors there is no question of settlement.

These are the things that worry my constituents, because it is not an impartial law; it is a partial law. It depends on one's country of origin and it appears in some cases to depend on the ethnic group to which one belongs. The Minister's argument is that there are these terrible Members who are breaching the conventions and it is not for Ministers to police them. It certainly is not. I would regard that as a violation of privilege. It is for the House to deal with conventions.

Let us remember that when hon. Members deal with other hon. Members' constituents it is not in the immigration area alone, and not all the Members are members of the Labour party. Does that mean that education is going to provide guidelines, that industry is going to provide guidelines? Are we going to change the whole system when, even on the Government's own estimates, very few people break the rules, if indeed the rules are being broken?

Presumably, what will happen now is that if I am on holiday abroad and I am not here to intervene on behalf of my constituents, they will lose their rights. This concerns me very much. Does this also mean that the hon. and learned Gentleman will now release the instructions given to immigration officers by the Home Office? I have asked several times for this and the answer has been no.

Has the Minister—this is a reasonable question—tried to contact the immigration service other than as a Minister? It takes me an awfully long time to do so, and if I am expected to do it for something like 20,000 Asians who are British and who may have families here, it is going to take even more time. Is the Department going to accept a reversed-charge call from Cyprus, for instance, because, if nobody can represent my constituents when I am out of the country, I must do it? Will the Minister pay for that, or is this merely a device to divert attention from the Department and to make the system so cumbersome that hon. Members will not have the right to represent their constituents? My constituents and I are deeply worried, and that concern is not confined simply to the Asian community. In the British system of government, people look for their freedom.

9.9 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): Many hon. Members who have spoken have described the guidelines in the most virulent terms, as an attack on the rights of immigrants and visitors. However, they skirted round the guidelines themselves and failed to explain why they found them so objectionable.

During the past seven years I have made representations on behalf of many hundreds of constituents, and I cannot think of a single case in which I would have found these guidelines a hindrance. Moreover, I do not believe that any of my constituents on whose behalf I have made representations have found me wanting in my actions on their behalf.

I wish to make only one brief point as time is extremely short. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) spoke about what one could reasonably describe as a type of charade in which hon. Members are involved. My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) said that temporary admission was sometimes used as a device. One must accept that that is frequently the case. Even the report of the immigration and nationality department in 1984 said:

"temporary admission goes some way towards taking the sting out of a decision to refuse admission on arrival."

Would it not be possible to introduce a new sort of admission, perhaps restricted admission, which requires the entrant to stay at the address of the sponsor where he is known to be and from where he will be required to leave after a period of, perhaps, two months? In that way, the uncertainty would be taken out of the issue, and he would not be expected to leave at four or five days' notice when a reply is received from the Minister. Because the number of those who abscond is so small, that solution may be acceptable to all concerned. I appreciate that there would be a new problem in that the individual would have been granted some sort of admission, but I hope that that could be overcome.

We should reconsider the immigration rules, keep them under review and see how we can make them fairer. However, these guidelines can only help with the implementation of the rules. They are to the advantage, certainly of hon. Members, and, ultimately, of those who depend on them.

9.12 pm

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): Today's debate on the guidelines that the Home Secretary has devised for Members of Parliament must be seen, and has been seen rightly by many hon. Members, in the context of our overall immigration policy. If there were not so much concern and anxiety about many aspects of the way in which the Immigration Act 1971 and immigration rules are being implemented, there would not have been so much

anxiety about the guidelines. That is not to say that we would not have been critical of them, but the measure of our concern is reflected widely throughout the country.

In case there is any misunderstanding I wish to emphasise, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) did earlier, that the Labour party believes in immigration controls, but without a racial or sexual bias. We are concerned about the guidelines because they come from a Government who have said on more than one occasion that their intention in immigration policy is to keep the numbers down. That theme has underlined many, but not all, of the speeches of Tory Members this evening. Guidelines which are intended to further a policy to keep numbers down, regardless of the needs, considerations and rights of individuals, must be suspect. In the main we are talking not about people coming in for settlement, but almost entirely about visitors, and some hon. Members were not clear about the difference between the two. This Government have a history of trying to limit hon. Members' rights in immigration cases, but they have never gone as far as they have in these guidelines.

Some figures were quoted about the number of refused passengers represented by Members of Parliament. I have looked at the figures and tried to understand them in the light of the Home Secretary's speech. Not all the figures for 1985 are to hand, but the figures made available to us so far show that between 1983 and 1984 the number of refused passengers represented by Members of Parliament increased by about 1,000. At the same time, the number of persons refused entry increased by 3,500. Whatever the Home Secretary says about an enormous increase in the number of representations by Members of Parliament, they are a reflection of the total number of people refused entry.

One other possible reason why more Members of Parliament are approached is that the minority communities are, happily, becoming increasingly aware of their rights. It is a sign of their greater involvement as people whose future is in Britain that they come to Members of Parliament and ask us to act on their behalf when they want members of their families to come along.

There is another side to the Home Secretary's argument about increasing pressure and a need for guidelines. Not all the pressure is increasing. The figures about outstanding appeals against all refusals in connection with immigration show that in December 1980 nearly 16,000 appeals were outstanding. By December 1984 the figure was under 10,000. Whatever else may be said, there is some sign of a diminution of pressure on Home Office resources in aspects of the immigration problem other than the one that directly concerns Members of Parliament.

In 1981, 1,057 people appealed against court refusals. Last year the figure was down to 681. The Home Secretary suggested that there is increasing pressure all along the line, but that is not true because in some areas there is less pressure. One of the reasons for our anxiety is that the guidelines tell us how to do our jobs on behalf of our constituents. Why should the Home Office, alone of all the Departments, be doing that? If the Home Office was keen to be helpful to Members of Parliament it would have included in the guidelines things that are not in the guidelines. For example, it would be helpful, if one were going this path, to say that Members of Parliament should let the Home Secretary know when facts that are not known and cannot be taken into account if a case goes to appeal, come to light. I could give other examples, but if the guidelines are to operate as the Home Secretary suggests that might have been a better way to go. I prefer not to go down the path of the guidelines.

I repeat what many of my hon. and right hon. Friends have said, that many of us do not like handling immigration cases. They are time-consuming and difficult and arise at all hours of the day and night. We do them, though we often regret the necessity and the pressure on us, because that is the only way we can achieve justice for our constituents.

I also support the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) and I will give some evidence to support it. He said he had a suspicion, but to me it is a fact, that immigration officers refuse visitors in the knowledge that Members of Parliament may well take up the case, that the person will then get seven or eight weeks in Britain, and that the Minister of State will uphold the immigration officer's refusal. That was certainly said to me on a recent visit to Heathrow. As an immigration officer at Heathrow airport said to me, "Everybody therefore should be happy. Members of Parliament have got what they want. Visitors are allowed in. The refusal is upheld." That is absolutely absurd. I have told the Minister of State before, and I repeat it in good faith——

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman must be careful about what he says. He is not saying, is he, that the immigration officer refused entry because this person was going to be granted temporary admission?

Mr. Dubs: I do not want to put words into the mouth of an immigration officer. I am arguing against the way in which some immigration officers behave. If the Government are willing to distort the way in which they approach intending visitors——

Mr. Waddington: I did not say that.

Mr. Dubs: The Minister says that he did not say that. If I have to repeat what was said to me, I am happy to do so. The immigration officer said to me that, knowing that Members of Parliament are likely to take up these cases, he was more likely to put down a refusal, knowing that in the end the Member of Parliament would get that person in on temporary admission. That is absurd, but the absurdity starts at the point of entry—Heathrow airport. It does not start with Members of Parliament. It is not an argument against the stop system. It is an argument that immigration control, particularly as regards visitors, should be applied fairly and properly.

Mr. Bidwell: This raises the absurdity of a two-day temporary admission to give time for the Member of Parliament to intervene. If the Government are prepared to risk giving a couple of days of liberty to people who come to the United Kingdom, why cannot they be provided with a decent form of admission?

Mr. Dubs: That is precisely the point. That is why some hon. Members have serious doubts about this proposal.

When the guidelines were first mooted, I wondered why it was thought to be necessary to introduce them. I have before me a circular from the Immigration Service Union that was sent to members of the union on 14 November 1985. I want to refer to two points that are contained in the circular. It refers to

"the problems caused by uncontrolled representation by Members of Parliament."

[Mr. Dubs]

The circular also says:

"The ISU delegation welcomed these developments and undertook to supply a list of the types of cases which the union considered as having no proper place in the system of MPs' representations."

Perhaps I am a little naive, but I am wondering whether the pressure that came from this particular source resulted in the decision of the Home Secretary and the Minister of State to act as they did. I understand that the original suggestion that all representations by Members of Parliament should go through chief immigration officers has been dropped because those who work in the immigration service realised that it would place a great deal of additional work upon their shoulders. Many hon. Members warned some time ago that that would happen. Despite the fact that the Home Secretary has climbed down by responding to the many criticisms and significantly toning down the guidelines compared with the original version, they contain a number of features to which many hon. Members on both sides of the House still object.

The Home Secretary said originally that it was necessary for Members of Parliament to approach chief immigration officers. We were concerned about this, both in principle and in practice. It represented a major departure from the principle that hon. Members have the right of direct access to Ministers. For this purpose access to the private offices of Ministers is the same as access to Ministers. It was not a fair approach to say to Members of Parliament that the analogy of Department of Health and Social Security officers in their dealings with members of the public should be used. When we take up immigration cases are we supposed to be advocates on behalf of our constituents or do we adopt a quasi-judicial function?

Some have argued that Members should approach the chief immigration officers rather than the Minister to obtain all the background information. Part of that argument is that Members of Parliament should act in a quasi-judicial role. For the life of me I cannot see how we can be expected to do that. It would be against the whole basis of many of the representations that Members take up on behalf of constituents on a whole range of subjects.

We are simply not able to judge for and against the admission of a person into a country. All we can do is to satisfy ourselves that there are reasonable grounds for that individual to be admitted. It is not necessarily the case that a long chat with the chief immigration officer would change the basis on which we make representation to the Minister. That also assumes that there is time to go to the chief immigration officer. Members of Parliament who take up visitor cases do so with good will and in the belief that there is a reasonably good case for that visitor to be admitted. It is not a matter of a quasi-judicial function but it is a matter of Members acting as advocates.

I wish that the guidelines had said that the time limits were advisory. In most cases it is reasonable that they should be adhered to and we seek to do that. However, there are times when that is difficult. That is especially true with the four-day and five-day limits set out in paragraph 9 and 14 respectively. It may not be possible to reach a constituent on the telephone. Also, the post is not that good. If any of us are away for a day or two we simply cannot get word to our constituent in time. It is proper that our constituents should be able to hear from us before a further decision about their future or about a relative's future is made by the Home Office.

The vexed argument whether Members should be utterly confined to taking up cases within their constituencies has taken up more time than anything else. The practice of my colleagues and myself is that we do put on stops on behalf of colleagues who may be away, ill or difficult to reach. There are also incidents when we may put on these stops on behalf of a Conservative Member of Parliament if that Member cannot be found, to enable the visitor to stay in the country long enough to ensure that the Member of Parliament can consider whether he or she wishes to make a representation on the visitor's behalf.

There is also the case where Members have a specialist interest, and that is acknowledged in the new version of the guidelines. However, some Members of Parliament bluntly refuse to take on immigration cases. What are we to do? There are two conventions which collide. One convention is the exclusive relationship of constituents to one Member of Parliament but the other convention is that everyone has basic rights. If those basic rights are ignored for whatever reason by a Member of Parliament, who is to say that that individual should not go to another Member and say, "I have basic rights. Help me to achieve those rights." That is the nub of the argument.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Change the sponsor.

Mr. Dubs: It is not as simple as that. Often there is no time to do that. When we are approached it is sometimes better, in the interest of the constituent or the person, to say that we will make a representation to the Home Office on their behalf.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I would not disagree with anything that the hon. Member has said. However, there is a problem regarding representation and we have to address ourselves to it. Does he not agree that there is a problem of "shopping around" and that if one could solve that problem it would be better?

Mr. Dubs: I do not agree at all that there is a problem of shopping around.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: We have one.

Mr. Dubs: I do not have that problem. I simply get people desperate that representations should be made but unable to find, perhaps on a Saturday evening, the Member they are looking for.

Mr. Corbyn: Does my hon. Friend accept that there is a further problem with the guidelines as proposed by the Minister? If a Member of Parliament refuses to take up immigration cases, for perverse reasons or out of prejudice, and the individual then goes to a Member who is prepared to take up the case, the Home Office proposes to copy the correspondence to the original Member who either flatly refused to take up the case or whose reputation makes him unlikely to be approached by people with immigration problems because they know the prejudice on which he operates.

Mr. Dubs: My hon. Friend anticipates my next point. In my view, it is improper for the Home Secretary to suggest in the guidelines that if a Member becomes involved in a case in another constituency the correspondence should be copied to the Member for that constituency. We are approached on a confidential basis,

sometimes precisely because the person is unhappy about going to the Member of Parliament in that constituency. We should respect that confidentiality and the Home Office should also respect it.

It may be a matter of embarrassment for the Home Secretary, but the views of one or two Conservative Back Benchers are such that the ethnic minority communities regard those Members as extremely hostile and would not want private information to be sent to them. It is therefore wrong for the Home Secretary to suggest in the guidelines that that information should be made available. If it is made available with permission, that is all right, but to make it available just like that is inappropriate and unsatisfactory.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that very few Conservative Members actually refuse to take cases? A number of others, however, may decide when they get a case that there is no substance in it. It is in those circumstances that we object to the individual going to another Member.

Mr. Dubs: There may be few, but there are certainly some, and we must be as concerned about people in those Members' constituencies as about people in our own constituencies.

One or two Conservative Members have referred to visas. In Bangladesh the current failure rate for visa applications is 30 per cent. People voluntarily apply for visas — there is no need to do so because they could simply arrive at Heathrow as Commonwealth citizens. The refusal rate at United Kingdom ports for people from Bangladesh is about 2 per cent. There must be some reason for the difference. Moreover, as the Minister will confirm, the success rate in appeals against the 30 per cent. refusals is about 50 per cent. A disturbingly high refusal rate in Bangladesh is suggested by the difference between the refusal rates in Bangladesh and at United Kingdom ports as well as by the high success rate of appeals against refusals in Bangladesh.

The cost of a visa regime would be enormous. An entry certificate officer costs the Home Office about £50,000 whereas an immigration officer based here costs about £15,000. The introduction of a visa system in the sub-continent would involve enormous difficulties, of principle as well as of cost and of practice.

I share the concern of those hon. Members, mainly my hon. Friends, who have referred to paragraph 19 of the guidelines about the consequences of hon. Members giving advice to people in their constituencies who wish to have visitors. Although the wording is now different from the original version, it still suggests that hon. Members are not behaving properly and that somehow we are conniving at getting into the country people who would not be admissible under the rules. It becomes a matter of subjective judgment in the end. The way the guidelines are worded still implies that the friends and relatives of constituents are to be penalised if our constituents have sought advice from us. I hope that the Home Secretary will think again about that because it is pernicious and wrong.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mr. Whitfield) attacked the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short). That attack went too far. The hon. Gentleman was not right to say about my hon. Friend what he said. Her speech was good; it was honest and reflected what many of us and the majority of people think. For the hon. Gentleman to cast such a slur on my hon. Friend was uncalled for and absolutely wrong.

In the debate we are not talking mainly about whether hon. Members should be helped to have easier or more difficult jobs, although that is a consideration which matters to us; what we are essentially concerned with are the rights of people here to have their relatives and friends come to stay with them as visitors. That is a basic right. The hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Sir K. Lewis), who is connected with the tourist industry, made a speech which suggested that he was totally against tourism to this country, if I understood correctly what he said. Yet he has two entries in "The Times Guide" which suggest that he is busy in the tourist industry when he is not in the House.

The right to have one's friends and relatives come here as visitors is basic. We all want our friends from abroad to come here as visitors. We should not deny that right to some people because of the colour of their skin. In the end that is at the heart of the guidelines. That is why we are against them and why I want the House to vote against them tonight.

9.37 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): This has been a good-tempered debate. I am grateful to right hon. and hon. Members for the points they have made. This was a difficult nettle to grasp. Hon. Members are naturally jealous of their rights and privileges and they are quick to react if they think that those rights and privileges are being infringed. I do not think many hon. Members really believe that we can leave things just as they are. There was an increase in representations by hon. Members in port cases alone from 1,000 in 1982 to 5,700 in 1985. The score in 1986 is likely to be at the very least 7,000.

Mr. Leighton: Why?

Mr. Waddington: Those figures relate just to port cases. Total representations were over 16,000 last year and no doubt will be higher this year. I want to make these points because obviously they have not gone home to certain Opposition Members in view of the sedentary intervention which was made just a moment ago. Immigration officers apply exactly the same rules now for visitors as they did when Labour was in power.

Ms. Clare Short: How do they interpret them?

Mr. Waddington: They operate them under precisely the same instructions and in precisely the same way. Taken as a percentage of total passenger traffic, refusals of people from the Indian sub-continent are few and far between. Of all passengers, 99·8 per cent. are admitted; of passengers from the Indian sub-continent, 99 per cent. are admitted.

The increase in representations cannot be accounted for by the increase in traffic or by the increase in refusals. I remind hon. Members of some key figures. In 1982 just over 12,000 people were refused entry; in 1983, 13,900. That was an increase of 14 per cent. Between 1983 and 1984 there was an increase of 24 per cent. in refusals but between 1982 and 1983, against an increase in traffic of 10 per cent. and an increase of refusals of 14 per cent., there was an increase in representations by hon. Members of no less than 150 per cent.

Hon. Members: Why?

Mr. Leighton: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Waddington: Between 1983 and 1984, against an increase in traffic of 13 per cent. and an increase in refusals of 24 per cent., there was a 40 per cent. increase in representations by hon. Members.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Leighton *rose*——

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Waddington: I should go on.

Mr. Corbyn: When the hon. and learned Gentleman refers to the total number of passengers arriving from the sub-continent, could he make it clear whether he means all passengers of whatever nationality or passengers from India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh or Pakistan? Having done so, I think that the hon. and learned Gentleman would be forced to concede that a far higher proportion of nationals of the sub-continent are refused than of the total figure of arrivals from those places.

Mr. Waddington: The figures that I have given are correct. When we talk of passengers from the Indian sub-continent, we mean Pakistan, Bangladesh and India. The figures for Sri Lanka are not included.

There are those enormous figures——

Mr. Leighton *rose*——

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Waddington: I will not give way. I was left very little time. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) spoke for twice as long as the Home Secretary and the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) spoke for longer than he should have.

In the face of those figures, it seems extraordinary that the right hon. Gentleman should ask why the guidelines are needed at all. The right hon. Gentleman said that the present system works satisfactorily.

Mr. Leighton *rose*——

Mr. Waddington: That was an extraordinary statement. It is extraordinary, too, that we should be told that in too many cases things go wrong. Our staff do their level best to prevent things going wrong but with the pressure of the system to which the enormous increase in representations contributes——

Mr. Straw: Why?

Mr. Waddington: I will not give way.

With that pressure, it is surprising that things do not go wrong more often. Immigration officers are spending much of their time writing letters to hon. Members—or to me, to send to hon. Members. Some of those hon. Members have put a stop on a case and taken no further action at all. The immigration officers would be far better employed clearing passengers through the controls without delay.

The burgeoning of the practice of putting stops on cases has other undesirable effects. First of all, the control is undermined. Because of the pressure of work and the very generous policy of temporary admission, a person who does not qualify to enter gets into the country anyhow. The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) made a joke of that, but it is a serious matter. People who do not qualify for entry get into the country all the same and can then stay for as long as they would have been entitled to stay if they had been granted leave to enter.

That state of affairs is not satisfactory. It occurs for two reasons. The first is that we are generous about temporary admission and allow people into the country instead of keeping them in detention as we could. Secondly, as a result of the increase in representations by Members of Parliament and the pressure of work on the immigration service, it is taking longer to deal with those cases than it did some years ago.

Another undesirable effect is that people who do not get temporary admission — luckily they are a minority because of the generous policy pursued — are kept in custody for longer than any of us would wish, again because of the pressure put on the system. No Labour Member would want that to continue.

The third unfortunate effect of all this is that the country is having to pay more and more in the way of the passage costs of people who have eventually to be removed——

Ms. Clare Short *rose*——

Mr. Waddington: —but who are not removed during the period when the cost falls upon the immigration service.

Ms. Short: The Minister is misleading the House.

Mr. Waddington: There has been a real——

Ms. Short: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The reason the country pays to return passengers is because the Minister——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must make a point of order, not a point of disagreement.

Ms. Short: Is the Minister allowed to mislead the House?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Nobody misleads the House. The Minister makes his own speech.

Mr. Waddington: If the hon. Lady will be patient, I shall get on to something which she said and I am sure that she will wish to intervene at that stage.

There has been a real process of consultation. We revised the original draft guidelines in the light of what was said. It is a pity that a number of hon. Members did not like the proposal that an hon. Member should approach the port to put on a stop, but we have accepted the views of a large number of hon. Members on that. I am sure that on reflection Labour Members will not cavil at the fact that we listened to what hon. Members said. I should have thought that that was the object of a consultation exercise such as this.

We are not trying to force anything down the throats of hon. Members. We are merely informing hon. Members how we intend to operate the system. It must operate. It is in the interests of all hon. Members that it should be operated. We must make the system work and that is why we have presented the guidelines to the House.

I shall not dwell for long on the speech made by the right hon. Member for Gorton, but he made a particularly nasty attack on the immigration service. In doing so he ignored the Commission for Racial Equality report which concluded that decisions made by immigration officers were not motivated by racism. He ignored entirely the

report of the Select Committee on Home Affairs and its unanimous conclusion that the staff of the immigration and nationality department deserved commendation, not criticism. It was a grossly unfair attack and it was a completely ignorant attack because the right hon. Gentleman cannot have bothered to investigate any of these reports to which I have referred.

Some hon. Members, including the right hon. Member for Gorton, have failed to recognise that there is more pressure to immigrate from some parts of the world than others. That is why there is a difference in refusal rates for visitors in the case of people seeking entry from some parts of the world compared with people seeking entry from other parts of the world.

Labour Members were quick to make political points this afternoon about refusal of entry statistics. But it is worth bearing in mind that if one looks, for instance, at refusals of people seeking entry as visitors from Pakistan in 1978 and compares that with people from Pakistan refused entry in 1984, one will find precisely the same percentage. I am slightly wrong. It is 1·1 per cent. in one case and 1·3 per cent. in the other. One should be very careful about quoting refusal rates.

A very silly comment was made about the present system working well. It is not working as well as it should do. But the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Bidwell) complimented the staff of my private office, and I am grateful to him for doing so. I should like to compliment them myself, as they work marvellously in a very difficult job. The hon. Member for Preston (Mr. Thorne) stood alone in the House when he made a disgraceful remark about racism in the Minister's office. He stood alone in that, as all hon. Members who take such matters seriously know how well my staff work and the service that they give to hon. Members. Some hon. Members made unsavoury allegations about racism and the immigration service. I repeat what I said earlier about the conclusions of the CRE report.

The hon. Member for Southall called for a right of appeal in this country for visitors refused entry, and took up the theme raised yesterday by the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) in his ten-minute Bill. But in making a decision about such matters one has to look at the administrative burden and at the difficulty of removing people within a reasonable time scale after they have gone through the appeal system. The whole appeal system can be spun out for a long time as Members of Parliament know from dealing with constituents who have become wrapped up in appealing against a refusal to extend their stay. When people exercise a right of appeal in this country and are turned down by the adjudicator and then by the immigration appeals tribunal, they are not slow to go to their Members of Parliament and to get them to come to me. Consequently, I am by no means confident that, if we had a right of appeal in this country, there would be less pressure on the Minister's office.

Mr. Bidwell: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Waddington: I shall not give way, as I have little time left and there are important matters to deal with.

The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) mentioned keeping passports. I shall repeat what was said to him by Opposition Members. If anyone wants his passport back, he has only to ask for it. I cannot for a moment believe that the hon. Gentleman has evidence of someone having a decision made against him because he had previously asked for his passport back. Many strange things happen, but I am sure that that has never happened.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) mentioned two cases in which she was involved. Of course, I shall not go into the facts of them. However, in paragraph 19 of the guidance we are talking about people being invited here when the Member of Parliament concerned knows that they are not entitled to enter. The Member of Parliament may know that the person could obtain legal entry to this country only as a result of obtaining entry clearance abroad, and that the person has not done so. If a Member of Parliament told a person that he should come anyhow, even though he would be refused because the Member of Parliament would apply for temporary admission, the vast majority of hon. Members would say that that was wrong. Surely everyone would agree that that would be a very odd way of using the privilege to put on a stop——

Ms. Short: Now may I ask my question?

Mr. Waddington: Yes.

Ms. Short: The hon. and learned Gentleman is completely wrong. As he knows, a Commonwealth citizen is entitled either to apply for an entry certificate for a visit or to come without one. I told someone who had been refused, not because of the rules but because of the prejudiced way in which they were interpreted, that he was legally entitled to come here without an entry certificate and that I would assist if he was then refused. That is absolutely in accordance with the law. What the Minister just said is wrong in law and in fact.

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Lady doth protest too much.

My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) asked that the time limits be flexibly enforced. We all have to be sensible about that. I recognise that, however carefully we draft guidelines of this sort, one will find exceptional cases. I can tell hon. Members that it is the intention of the Home Office to try to operate the guidelines sensibly. I think that the feeling of the House tonight was that it is about time we spelt out what ought to be a reasonable time in which to make representations; otherwise cases can go on and on.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) made some interesting points. I shall look into his point about interpreters using direct speech and about too much attention being paid to lies. However, I suspect that it is difficult to ignore the fact that a person has exercised deception when one is asked to decide whether a person is telling the truth when he says that he only wants to enter the country for a short visit and will then return abroad. My hon. and learned Friend said that he would act responsibly under the new guidelines. I am sure that that is what he will do and that that is the wish and the intention of all hon. Members who have been present during the debate. I am sure that we can make the new system work.

My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) said that the misuse of a system to make representations can disadvantage genuine visitors. I am sure that that is true and we should continue to make that

[Mr. Waddington]

point as hard as we can. If we have pressure on the system, such as we have, it can obviously lead to delays at the ports, which could otherwise have been avoided.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler) said that he thought it was a pity we left out the provision about approaching the ports. I think that it would have been helpful to hon. Members to be able to hear the reasons for the refusal at first hand from a senior immigration officer. I realise that it would have involved hon. Members in more work and some expense in telephoning the port concerned. However, I do not accept that any issues of constitutionality were involved, because it is plain that when a person puts on a stop now he is not asking me to exercise any discretion. He is merely ringing my private office and asking it to relay a message to the ports. It is an automatic process which has nothing to do with the hon. Member's right of access to the Minister. That point was completely bogus. However, I can see that hon. Members would have been faced with more work and they already have an enormous amount of work to do in constituencies with a large ethnic minority community.

There has been a misunderstanding about the time limit of only four days after I have rejected a submission by an hon. Member to reverse the decision made by an immigration officer. In fact, we work on four days now. We do that as a courtesy to hon. Members so that we can make absolutely sure that they will receive the letter from me saying that I have rejected their submission before the person who is going to have to return abroad is told by the immigration service. Therefore, there is nothing to worry about there.

On the matter of poaching, I would merely say that I understand the anxiety which has been expressed by some hon. Members. However, I have to tell hon. Members that they may not have a clear idea of the aggravation that has to be borne by my staff who are faced with angry Members from both sides of the House.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That this House do now adjourn:—

The House divided: Ayes 116, Noes 185.

Division No. 117] **[10 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Eadie, Alex
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McCartney, Hugh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pike, Peter
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Ray Powell.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Best, Keith
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Cockeram, Eric
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby

Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Powley, John
Raffan, Keith
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

Professions Supplementary to Medicine

That the draft Professions Supplementary to Medicine (Winding up of Remedial Gymnasts Board) Order of Council 1986, which was laid before this House on 10th March, be approved.

Local Government (Scotland)

That the Local Authority Grants (Termination) (Scotland) Order 1986, dated 6th March 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 13th March, be approved.

Legal Aid and Advice

That the Legal Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) Regulations 1986, dated 13th February 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 3rd March, be approved.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITIONS

Shops Bill

10.13 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I beg leave to present the following petition:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The humble petition of residents of Newark Constituency sheweth that the undersigned are opposed to the provision for unlimited Sunday Trading in the Shops Bill currently before Parliament, recognising that Sunday has special characteristics as a day of rest, recreation and worship for the benefit of our family and community life.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House do maintain legal limitations on Sunday Trading to ensure that the special character of Sunday is protected.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

Father Timothy O'Sullivan of the Holy Trinity church is the leading signatory to the petition, which was signed by 1,160 of my constituents. The petition reflects the concern of many of my constituents. I have pleasure in presenting it on their behalf.

To lie upon the Table.

10.14 pm

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I present this petition of behalf of some 2,000 signatories in my constituency of Teignbridge. The terms of the petition are that they are opposed to the provision of unlimited Sunday trading under the Shops Bill at present before Parliament, recognising that Sunday has substantial characteristics as a day of rest, recreation and worship, to the benefit of our family and community life.

This is a substantial petition. The principal organisers, as I understand it, were a Mr. and Mrs. Holding of Teignmouth in my constituency. They are to my knowledge local Baptists and I recognise many of the signatures to this petition as those of Baptists who have spoken to me at least at one meeting.

I think that it is fair that I say of those people who asked me to present the petition on their behalf that I can entirely understand their motives, aspirations and hopes. The only way in which I differ from them is in that, although I understand their fears, I feel that they are misplaced. Having said that, the depth of concern that they felt in presenting this petition to me was entirely evident and it is certainly no hardship to present it in that light.

The conclusion of the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House do maintain legal limitations on Sunday trading to ensure that the special character of Sunday is protected.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Arms Control (Verification)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

10.16 pm

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): I am pleased to initiate this important debate, because we all have an interest in peace. There can be no dispute that arms control, particularly in respect of nuclear weapons, has a major part to play in achieving greater global security and prolonged peace. Verification is an essential part of that process. As was pointed out in the United Kingdom working paper of 1 August 1983 to the Committee on Disarmament, entitled "Verification aspects of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty"

"What is at issue is the political will to recognise that the correct path towards an agreed Treaty—however long it may prove to be — leads through detailed considerations of verification issues. Once we are confident that those problems have been resolved — and the solution must not permit disequilibrium in international relationships by allowing one side to gain advantage over another—then we can move towards the final banning of all nuclear tests."

In that same document it was pointed out that verification is not detection alone but detection and identification.

The Government remain firmly committed to the pursuit of a verifiable comprehensive test ban and are actively working on the problems that remain in achieving one. This was reaffirmed as recently as 7 June 1985 in this House when my right hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce), then in the position now occupied by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) whom I welcome, not least as my mother's constituency Member, was replying to an Adjournment debate on a test ban treaty. He pointed out then that:

"We should be proud of the fact that Britain played a leading and distinctive role in the early 1960s, in drawing up the partial test ban treaty . . . Together with the United States and the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom participated fully from 1977 to 1980 in trilateral negotiations on a comprehensive test ban treaty . . . The United Kingdom has played a full and active part in . . . multilateral discussions at the Geneva conference on disarmament, where a nuclear test ban working group was established in 1982."

The United Kingdom tabled two working papers on "Peaceful Nuclear Explosions in Relation to a Nuclear Test Ban" and the paper to which I have already referred.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham said that the Government

"remain convinced of the value of further work in Geneva towards a comprehensive test ban".

We are committed to seeking progress towards it. During that debate he also said

"no test ban treaty can be truly worth pursuing which does not contain adequate safeguards of compliance by all its signatory parties."

that is a contention with which I agree. He also pointed out:

"we are not looking for perfect or 100 per cent. verification".—[*Official Report*, 7 June 1985, Vol. 80, c. 616-17.]

The whole House will know that of the non-proliferation treaty we are required to show that we are using our best endeavours to make progress towards nuclear disarmament, and the final declaration of the third review conference of the NPT, held in Geneva last August to September, called upon the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom to reconvene their trilateral negotiations on a comprehensive test ban treaty by the end of 1985.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, in a speech at Harrogate on 27 March 1982, said

"We want a Comprehensive Test Ban. Negotiations under that Committee (The Committee on Disarmament at the UN in Geneva), alas, are going far too slowly, but it remains this Government's objective."

Our commitment to a comprehensive test ban treaty is not unique. Yet, I believe that we have a particular role to play in acting as a catalyst and seeking to remove obstacles. Clearly, however, bearing in mind that we possess only about 3 per cent. of the world's nuclear weapons compared with 95 per cent. in the possession of the United States and the Soviet Union, we must look to agreement between the super powers, and the effect that we can have on it. Hon. Members may recall that in his written statement on 24 February 1986, President Reagan said,

"We are also pleased that the Soviet Union has indicated publicly that it now recognises our long-held position that verification of negotiated agreements is critical. We intend to pursue in specific terms at the negotiating table General Secretary Gorbachev's public offer to resolve any necessary verification issues."

Even more recently, on 6 March of this year Paul Nitze, special adviser to the President and Secretary of State on arms control matters, said that it was vitally necessary that any new arms control agreements incorporate stringent verification measures including measures more comprehensive and exacting than in any previous agreement. He welcomed implicit recognition of that point suggested in those parts of Mr. Gorbachev's public statement dealing with on-site inspection and other co-operative measures that may be necessary. Accordingly, Mr. Nitze stated, the United States intended to pursue Mr. Gorbachev's overture on verification. He spoke of the ultimate goal of a world committing the total elimination of nuclear weapons, and the fact that the new Soviet leadership tried to deal concretely with the problem of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, or at least gave the appearance of doing so. He complained, nevertheless, that the Soviet proposal was front-loaded in that its first stage called for measures that would assure the USSR superiority in virtually all categories of military capability at the end of that stage, reserving for stages two and three things that could be of interest to the West, and leaving a number of the essential preconditions to the non-nuclear world wholly uncovered.

Almost exactly a month after the Adjournment debate last year to which I have referred, the Government submitted a paper to the conference on disarmament entitled "Seismic Monitoring for a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban". This is a full and technical document dealing with the matter, and acknowledges that seismoligical methods offer the only practical long-range means of monitoring compliance with the treaty banning underground nuclear weapon test explosions. We should not forget that the limited test ban treaty which came into force in 1963 prohibited nuclear explosions in space, in the atmosphere and in the oceans, and there has been no serious objection raised to the monitoring of compliance with that treaty. The threshold test ban treaty was signed in 1974 between the United States and USSR limiting underground nuclear weapons tests to yields of 150 kilotons, and I have not heard of any difficulties in monitoring compliance with the specific nature of that treaty.

The United Kingdom's paper to the conference on disarmament states that a negotiated ban on underground nuclear testing would certainly demand setting up a global seismic network for monitoring at teleseismic ranges. How such a network would be provided has not been decided, although the activities of the ad hoc group of scientific experts appointed by the conference on disarmament suggest that parties to a treaty would contribute existing stations to the network. If that were the case the network would not be optimised from the technical point of view, the locations of stations would not be ideal for the global monitoring role, and the equipment at some stations would not be of the highest possible quality. It concludes that on the basis of data currently available it is estimated that a properly designed and deployed global network of seismic stations would achieve a detection threshold of a magnitude of four, and an identification threshold of a magnitude of four and a half throughout the world, which could enable nuclear tests with yields above a few tens of kilotonnes to be undiscovered. The paper concludes:

"At least for the present it appears that monitoring at teleseismic ranges by itself would be insufficiently effective to permit a test ban to be brought into force."

The most interesting section of the paper, however, is that which deals with high seismic frequencies, and paragraph 55 which states:

"It appears from the above that there are possibilies for test ban monitoring in observing higher seismic frequencies than have hitherto been considered. It will be necessary to demonstrate that high frequency signals can indeed be detected over a variety of source/receiver paths and to investigate whether the sources of detected high frequency signals can be identified as earthquakes or explosions with adequate assurance. If a high frequency programme was successful in these respects, there would be promise of at least a partial technical solution to the low yield and the decoupled explosion problems. However, for monitoring against low yield decoupled explosions, regional stations would certainly be required because the seismic magnitudes would be equivalent to a strongly coupled explosion of 200 tons or less."

One major obstacle to this advance in detection and identification has been removed by the Soviet Union reaffirming its position at the Geneva summit in November 1985 that it is prepared to have internal seismographic stations installed. In an interesting article in the *Financial Times* of 19 November 1985, Mr. David Fishlock in an article "Monitor to Beat Test Ban Cheating" wrote:

"If a complete test ban on nuclear explosions were ever agreed between the US and the Soviet Union the system could give the necessary assurance that neither was cheating. But first the Soviets would have to gain the kind of confidence the US is beginning to show in NORESS, its prototype seismic detector in Norway. The Norwegian Regional Seismic Array is a pattern of seismic detectors laid over a circular area of pine forest three kilometres across near Hamar, one hundred kilometres north of Oslo. The array of 25 seismometers detect and pinpoint the explosion. Regional seismometers overcome the objection about confusion between nuclear explosions and earthquakes. The differences are readily apparent in seismograms, but lessen with distance. Moreover, another objection to existing verification techniques, decoupling or the carrying out of explosions in caverns rather than in holes or in highly compressible ground so as to muffle to shock waves, can be spotted by NORESS. As NORESS has a range of about only 2,000 kilometres it will need to be located on Soviet as well as Western soil. Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, New Mexico, thinks that arrays can be installed for about one million dollars each."

Verification requires that each nation has a reliable and objective means of monitoring the military activities of the other. In the debate on verification and in the interests of our goal of a comprehensive test ban treaty, we cannot rely on the evidence of yesterday. We must constantly review

[Mr. Keith Best]

the technological advance of verification techniques which are being rapidly enhanced. Satellite and aerial photography, seismology, radar and radiation detection have been refined and improved since their introduction. New methods of infra-red sensors, image and data-processing techniques and synthetic aperture radar are available. Synthetic aperture radar enables the United States to monitor areas in the Soviet Union that are covered by clouds and are in daylight only for a few hours each day. It does not have great resolution but images can be computer-enhanced.

Advanced conventional radar based on land, sea or air, can easily track Soviet missile tests and is very reliable. Over-the-horizon radar is utilised by the United States. These devices project beams that the ionosphere which acts like a mirror and reflects into the interior of the USSR. Radar of this type also provides useful information about the velocity of the missile. Radio receivers on the ground and on high orbit satellites intercept the stream of messages that the missile during testing sends back to the ground and those messages describe the performance and conditions of the various parts of the missile.

The messages, known collectively as telemetry, include information on how much fuel is being burned, the commands that the guidance system is sending to the rocket, and the temperature and pressure that different parts of the missile are experiencing. All these signals are intercepted by US monitoring facilities. By correlating such telemetry data with information about the motion of the missile gathered by ground based radars, US intelligence officers know not only that the USSR has tested a missile, but also discover many of its performance characteristics.

These are means of gathering intelligence about missiles, but the means of monitoring underground tests are also highly advanced. A nuclear explosion is a point-like event that releases a huge amount of energy abruptly into the environment. The limited extent and the suddenness of such an event, force the device to release its energy in much shorter waves which have far higher frequencies than an earthquake, which is a widespread event. As a result, the waves from a nuclear explosion can be detected and recognised by their frequency characteristics even if they are accompanied by those of an earthquake.

The unmanned seismic stations which Sandia National Laboratories has devised have been tested, and there are now five such stations in the US and Canada for practice and demonstration purposes. These stations communicate constantly by satellite relay with a central control facility in the US, making them virtually tamperproof. The USSR has accepted a proposal for the emplacement of such stations on its soil during negotiations for a comprehensive test ban treaty. Consequently, there appears to be no technical obstacle to monitoring with great competence underground nuclear tests releasing as little as one kiloton or less of energy. These assertions need to be investigated critically and carefully. I hope that my hon. Friend will do so.

We are committed to a comprehensive test ban treaty. The United States House of Representatives has passed a motion calling upon the President to:

"Propose to the Soviet Union the immediate resumption of negotiations towards conclusion of a verifiable Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty."

The Soviet Union is prepared to have unmanned monitoring devices on its own territory and the United States Administration seeks the total elimination of nuclear weapons, yet that does not happen. I do not underestimate the problems associated with adequate verification, but these are capable of solution in the near future if not at the present time. Perhaps there is a need for a third party exerting influence. With the high international reputation that the United Kingdom enjoys, a reputation that has been enhanced under this Government, we are ideally suited to that task.

Six world leaders in the five continents peace initiative recently made an offer to Moscow and Washington to assume a direct role in the monitoring process of verification. The proposal grew out of the peace initiative presented by the six leaders in May 1984, a summit meeting of the leaders in New Delhi in January 1985, and scientific studies of nuclear test monitoring undertaken by US seismic experts. The leaders have said that they are ready to offer their good offices in order to facilitate the establishment of effective verification arrangements.

The violence and uncertainty of the world is manifested by the tragedy that one of those leaders, Indira Gandhi, was assassinated. Her son, Rajiv, has taken up his mother's mantle in this regard and pursued it with great energy. Another of those leaders was Mr. Olof Palme, tragically assassinated so recently. The five continents peace initiative has been sponsored by Parliamentarians Global Action, formerly Parliamentarians for World Order, of the international council which I have been privileged to be the chairman. A comprehensive test ban treaty will by itself not give greater global security. The potential use of nuclear weapons is not wholly inhibited by banning tests. The effectiveness of modern nuclear weapons can now be tested increasingly by computers without the need to rely on tests at all. We still need to find a system of international arbitrament of disputes which is universally acceptable and removes the need for possession of weapons of mass destruction. Only then will there be the capacity for prolonged peace but, as is acknowledged and pursued by this Government, a comprehensive test ban treaty is an important step forward. It is within reach if we are prepared to stretch out and grasp it.

10.30 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tim Renton): I should like to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) for the opportunity which his keen interest has given me to restate the Government's view on this important subject of verification in arms control. I should also like to thank him for complimenting the Government upon their commitment to the arms control process. I congratulate him, too, upon the extent of his technical knowledge that he has shown in the remarks that he has just addressed to the House.

My hon. Friend has joined other hon. Members in calling for the resumption of trilateral negotiations for a comprehensive test ban treaty, so it is timely that I should now restate clearly that the Government remain firmly and actively committed to the arms control and disarmament

process, in which our aim is the strengthening of peace and security at lower levels of armaments and military expenditure.

However, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in her speech to the United Nations second special session on disarmament in 1982, verification is the heart of the matter, not an optional extra. It is an essential ingredient if any arms control agreement is genuinely to enhance stability and security. It is virtually impossible to achieve perfect verification. On the other hand, inadequate verification is unacceptable since it would undermine the very confidence which arms control agreements seek to promote. It is equally impossible to quantify in precise terms what level of verification would be acceptable for any particular arms control agreement.

The degree of verification required in each case will be a matter for considered political judgment, taking technical considerations into account. This judgment will include the extent of political confidence on one side that the other side will comply with the treaty in question. Effective verification and confidence have to go hand in hand.

To build this confidence we need to have satisfactory answers to some basic questions. For example, will undetected evasion of the agreement provide a significant military advantage? Will significant non-observance of the agreement be detected early enough, in time to allow the necessary counter-measures to be taken? Even if the evidence of such non-observance is available, will it be convincing enough to justify such counter-measures? And if we feel satisfied on these points, will we then have the ability to deter any temptation to depart from strict compliance with the agreement?

Arms control agreements, if they are to work, must therefore contain clear, unambiguous and effective provisions dealing with these questions and providing the maximum guarantee of strict compliance.

As my hon. Friend has just said, the Government remain fully committed to the goal of a verifiable, comprehensive test ban treaty. We see such a treaty as an important objective in our overall arms control policy, but we remain seriously concerned on the self-same score of verification. It is wrong to dismiss these concerns, as some do—though not my hon. Friend—in a cavalier fashion. Key security interests would be affected by any such treaty, and the risks created by undetected non-compliance would be especially grave.

There are at present inadequacies in our ability to detect and identify nuclear tests. Claims that these technical problems no longer exist, and can therefore be ignored, are simply not borne out by the scientific advice available to the Government. Wishful thinking on this key matter must not be allowed to over-ride impartial scientific analysis. Our experience of previous negotiations in this area suggests that these remaining problems will not be easily resolved; and against this background we consider it premature to resume negotiations until solutions become more apparent.

Let me explain our reservations. Seismology offers the most realistic prospect for verifying a comprehensive test ban treaty. Every year thousands of earthquakes occur which in seismic terms show similar characteristics to those of nuclear tests. When such events, and nuclear tests, occur above a certain level of seismic activity, we can detect them and we are confident that we can distinguish between them. At lower levels of seismic activity, we are less confident that we have the necessary ability both to detect and identify them correctly especially for small nuclear explosions. In the present state of the art our assessment is that the best which could be achieved is thresholds of detection and identification above the level at which militarily significant testing can occur.

Another argument is that the risks involved in this leakage are acceptable. We do not agree. Let us remember also that we know relatively little about the geological data of other possible testing sites, such data being essential for the accurate interpretation of seismic events. We may indeed be able to detect and identify high-yield tests conducted at sites whose geological features are familiar to us. Tests involving small nuclear explosions elsewhere could be more difficult—even impossible—to identify, especially if they were conducted with deliberate subterfuge.

As my hon. Friend said, the full range of issues involved in seismic monitoring was thoroughly aired in the paper the United Kingdom tabled at the conference on disarmament at Geneva last July. It followed two earlier papers to which my hon. Friend also referred.

We do not believe that these papers have received the attention they deserve. One way for them to receive this attention would be for more work to be done in the ad hoc group of scientific experts in the conference on disarmament, to which the United Kingdom would be prepared to contribute. In parallel we will continue to seek an appropriate mandate for an ad hoc committee to discuss these and related matters.

Another idea for verifying a comprehensive test ban Treaty is third country monitoring or an international seismic monitoring network. In this context my hon. Friend has referred to the "six nation" offer of October 1985 to set up monitoring stations on their territory as part of an international network to monitor a nuclear test ban. This offer was directed to President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev in the run-up to their summit meeting in Geneva. The latest six-nation appeal, at the end of February, was similarly directed at the leaders of the two super powers.

There are difficulties with these ideas. First, the seismic stations would have to overcome all the difficulties I have described. Even if any stations used high-frequency monitoring, we do not yet know enough about the capabilities of this technique to place confidence in it achieving adequate verification. But third country monitoring could have a role to play in any adequate verification regime. We certainly hope that those of the six Nations which are members of the conference on disarmament will pursue their ideas at Geneva. As for satellite monitoring, it may help to complement seismological verification, but no more. It is one thing for a satellite to discover and photograph a hole in the ground but it is another to say what that hole is for or what is in it.

In my hon. Friend's interesting speech he also referred to the NORESS experiment being developed in Norway. On 20 November last year I said in the House that this is an interesting development which merits further study. I assure my hon. Friend that our minds are open to all new developments in this area.

My hon. Friend also referred to the announcement by the Soviet Union that it is prepared to have internal seismographic stations installed on its territory. It is true that Mr. Gorbachev in his January proposals offered some

[Mr. Tim Renton]

form of on-site inspection, but this was in vague terms and only, in his words, "where necessary." Let the Russians explain in detail what they mean. The Americans, on the other hand, deal in specific proposals. For example, in July last year President Reagan offered technical exchanges on verification problems, including the idea of a visit by Soviet experts to witness a US test with any equipment that they wanted to bring.

The Russians have so far failed to address this offer with any seriousness, but it would be a useful step forward in discussing verification in the context of the threshold test ban treaty to which my hon. Friend referred, or the peaceful nuclear explosions treaty, signed but not ratified in the 1970s. Progress towards ratifying those treaties would help to build confidence before tackling the much more difficult issue of a CTBT. Despite the lack of a positive Soviet response to the July offer, President Reagan has just repeated his invitation for a visit to Nevada at a specific time in April. This would allow the Russians to examine a specific and highly promising technology called CORRTEX, which might well provide an adequate basis for verifying yields of explosions and thus help resolve verification issues in the context of the TTB and PNE treaties. We would welcome progress towards ratification. The Soviet response so far has unfortunately once again reportedly been negative, but I very much hope that this will not be their last word.

In contrast with those practical proposals, which President Reagan has been making since 1983, the Russians have been promoting an unverifiable moratorium on testing. This is accompanied by claims that existing means of verification are adequate, or that if only others would join the moratorium verification would not be a problem. I ask my hon. Friend to contrast the realistic, practical approach of seeking to make progress in areas where it should be possible with the approach of proceeding from the outset on the assumption that the desired objective is already a fait accompli.

Has Mr. Gorbachev's position moved beyond the Soviet position of the early 1960s that verification should be concerned only with the reduction phase of an agreement and not with verifying the residual armaments remaining in place? The answer to that important question must be found at the various negotiations which are now in progress. We were frankly disappointed by the first such evidence of how we are to interpret Mr. Gorbachev's positive words when translated into deeds. He stated in January that in the Vienna talks on mutual and balanced force reductions he was willing to accept reasonable verification measures. We therefore looked for a constructive response to the Western proposal of December 1985.

This proposal removed the apparent obstacle of prior data agreement which the East had claimed to be a stumbling block to progress. The West at the same time accepted the Eastern concept of a time-limited agreement involving the United States and Soviet reductions put forward in the Eastern proposal of February 1985. Thus, the Western proposal represented a significant concession and provided a sound basis for progress after so many years of deadlock. Yet the Warsaw Pact's response last month was, alas, merely a rehash of the proposals that the Eastern side tabled in 1983. They were inadequate then and they are inadequate now, because on both information exchange and verification they fail to provide the necessary basis for ensuring the accurate monitoring of compliance.

Verification is also a key issue in the search for a comprehensive and lasting ban on chemical weapons at the conference on disarmament in Geneva. The proposed verification regime for the convention in question is the most extensive yet envisaged for an arms control agreement. Given the widespread industrial application of many chemicals which can be used to produce such weapons, the verification procedures must on the one hand ensure compliance with the convention yet, on the other, they must not compromise commerical confidentiality, or interfere with the day-to-day operation of countries' chemical industries. The United Kingdom, I am glad to say, has taken a leading role at the conference in recent years in proposing verification methods with this aim.

A system of international inspection will, it is generally accepted, be required to monitor the destruction of chemical weapon stockpiles. Routine international inspections will also be necessary, we believe, to check that such weapons are not subsequently produced. In addition, we maintain that an extra element of inspection on challenge is essential in order to deter cheating. The United Kingdom is this year chairing these negotiations for a chemical weapons convention in Geneva and we are pressing very hard for progress.

I agree with my hon. Friend that an agreement with inadequate verification is worse than no agreement at all. The aim of verification must be to generate confidence in arms control agreements.

Once again I should like to thank my hon. Friend for his recognition of the Government's efforts in this most important sphere. Arms control is very much on the East-West agenda this year, more so than for a great many years. In these circumstances of hope it is even more important than ever that we find agreement on realisable measures of verification. That will move the arms control process forward.

The Question having been proposed after Ten o'clock and the debate have continued for half an hour, MR. SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at fourteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 27 March 1986

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

1. **Mr. Archer** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the dates and agenda for the next Intergovernmental Conference under the Anglo-Irish agreement.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): Dates of meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference are not released in advance. But while it is not our normal practice to release the agenda in advance, the joint statement issued after the last meeting on 11 March indicated that at its next meeting the conference would consider cross-border security co-operation, the development of relations between the security forces and the community, legal matters, measures to enhance public confidence in the administration of justice, and cross-border economic and social co-operation.

Mr. Archer: Has it struck the right hon. Gentleman that while the political orators have been debating the merits of the emperor's new clothes, many people in Northern Ireland have been waiting to see whether he will be any warmer? After four months, can the Secretary of State point to anything that has changed in daily life in Northern Ireland because it was discussed in the Intergovernmental Conference? If not, when and where can we begin gathering in the harvest?

Mr. King: The most important prize for many will be to get greater confidence in the effectiveness of the security forces and in the fight against terrorism. As I have said to the House, that will be a progressive movement and it will obviously take time for it to develop. However, I am encouraged by the start of the co-operation, particularly in much of the work now taking place between the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Garda under the leadership of the Commissioner and the Chief Constable. I think that the first fruits were shown in the by-elections in the switch of votes from those who support violence to those who support the constitutional Nationalist approach, which was a further encouraging development.

Mr. Gow: Will my right hon. Friend consider removing the secretariat for the Intergovernmental Conference from the Province? Will he also consider the advantages that would flow if future meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference at ministerial level were to take place not in the Province but in London?

Mr. King: The word secretariat has led many people to believe that it is a much more substantial body than is the case. In fact, the secretariat is made up of the secretaries of the conference. The agreement makes it clear that its duty is to service the conference. Obviously it is sensible for that to be organised in a co-operative way. I have picked my hon. Friend up on the point that he made, but my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has just written to the leaders of the two Unionist parties. The letter makes it absolutely clear that we are committed to the agreement and will not suspend it. There is an important statement that we are prepared to operate the agreement in a sensitive way and encourage Unionists to enter into discussions on a wide range of matters. I very much hope that that invitation will be accepted and that we can sit down to sensible discussions about the whole range of issues which are of concern to the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. McNamara: Does the right hon. Gentleman think that it helps confidence in the accord, particularly among the Nationalist community, if members of his ministerial team seek out members of the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill and advise them not to hear oral evidence from the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) on the role of the Ulster Defence Regiment?

Mr. King: I am not aware of that matter. Obviously it is a matter for the Select Committee and its dealings.

Mr. Stanbrook: Does my right hon. Friend think that the cause of the Anglo-Irish agreement has been advanced or retarded, by the refusal of the Dublin court to grant Britain's recent application for the extradition of Evelyn Glenholmes?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend will know that part of the very clear objective of the Anglo-Irish agreement is to improve the efficiency of the extradition procedures. I should have thought that all the evidence of those events, upon which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has commented, makes it ever more clear that those arrangements need to be improved.

Mr. Mallon: Will the Secretary of State confirm that a sizeable section of the population in Northern Ireland are in favour of the accord and want to see it working? Will he consider directing some of his remarks to that section of the community at the earliest possible opportunity, instead of expressing his own inherent Unionism at every opportunity?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman will have heard my words. I have made it absolutely clear that we are committed to and will not suspend the agreement. I am well aware of that fact. I recognise that one of the consequences of the agreement was a recognition among the Nationalist community of the opportunity of progress by constitutional means rather than by having to support the men of violence. I thought that I had made my views very clear on that point. At the same time, it is not in the Nationalist interest to have the degree of misunderstanding and discontent that undoubtedly exists among the Unionist community over the Anglo-Irish agreement. I am anxious that those fears and misunderstandings should be relieved and that genuine concerns should be met in discussions with the Unionists on a number of aspects, such as methods of consultation and involvement that are available to them as well.

Flags and Emblems (Display) Act 1954

2. **Mr. Bell** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations have been made through the Inter-Governmental Conference concerning the repeal of the Flags and Emblems (Display) Act 1954.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Nicholas Scott): The Irish side put forward views and proposals about the Flags and Emblems (Display) Act 1954 at the meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference on 10 January. The Government responded at the conference meeting on 11 March.

Mr. Bell: The Flags and Emblems (Display) Act 1954 has been irrelevant for a long time. Although a statement was made by the Government during the discussions to which the Minister referred that there is no such thing as joint authority and that decisions will not be taken on a joint authority basis, will he nevertheless assure the House that this legislation will be repealed during the next parliamentary Session?

Mr. Scott: No. We shall have to consult widely within Northern Ireland about any proposals that are made for a draft order which might include proposals relating to the Flags and Emblems (Display) Act 1954. It is worth being very clear about the Act, which I know has a symbolic effect on both sides of the community in Northern Ireland. It does not ban the flying of the tricolour in Northern Ireland, although there is widespread misapprehension that that is the case. However, it gives special protection to the Union flag in Northern Ireland, which evidently is not considered to be necessary in Great Britain. There is some argument at least for saying that we ought to move towards greater parity of treatment in this matter between Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

Mr. Cash: On the question of the scrutiny of legislation and the procedures that are available in the context of Northern Ireland, will my hon. Friend consider the proposal that has been made for a Select Committee and whether that might provide a forum within which matters such as legislation could be dealt with, having regard to the need to have a round table discussion between hon. Members within the context of the Union as a whole?

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said in her letter to the Unionist leaders that she is anxious to talk to them and to discuss what kind of mechanisms might be appropriate for discussions on a wide range of matters in Northern Ireland, not only those that are concerned with the Anglo-Irish agreement. Ministers in Northern Ireland regret very much that the arrangements for consultation between them and the Assembly are not working at the moment because of the refusal of the Assembly to carry out its statutory duties.

Mr. Peter Barry (Talks)

3. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to visit the Republic of Ireland to hold further discussions with the Irish Foreign Minister.

Mr. Tom King: I have at present no plans to visit the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Flannery: May we assume that when the Minister does speak to his equivalent or to representatives of the Republic of Ireland he will give them assurances that the horrific details of the so-called day of action on 3 March, which are now steadily filtering through to those of us who are keenly interested, will in no way deter the Government from treading the path that they have now decided to tread and that they will not be put off by events of that nature, no matter how many times they are repeated?

Mr. King: There is not much doubt that many of the events of 3 March horrified the overwhelming majority of people in the Province, whatever their persuasion or loyalty. I believe that it is the fervent wish of the vast majority never to see such scenes repeated. I give the assurance that I have given before from the Dispatch Box, that Parliament will not be intimidated by such violence. If it were, the prospects for all in the Province would be much more unhappy.

Sir Philip Goodhart: When my right hon. Friend next communicates with the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Republic of Ireland, will he inquire why no attempt was made to arrest Miss Glenholmes on a charge of being a suspected member of the IRA , which is an offence in the Republic? Will he tell the Minister that Dublin's reaction to the Glenholmes affair has reminded some people in this country that too many people in Dublin still have an equivocal attitude to terrorism?

Mr. King: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made a statement on this matter. There is to be a disciplinary inquiry by the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. We are concerned to ensure that extradition works effectively and wish to achieve maximum co-operation with all countries, expecially the Republic of Ireland, to ensure that terrorists are brought to book.

Mr. Hayes: When my right hon. Friend next sees Mr. Barry, will he make it clear to him that the Glenholmes fiasco has nothing to do with the Anglo-Irish agreement? Will he make it clear also that many Conservative Members commend, rather than castigate, the Garda for its action? The Garda's political bosses took many political risks on their side of the water.

Mr. King: I note my hon. Friend's comments. I recognise the efforts by the Garda in this respect. I am confident of the good will of the Government of the Republic in seeking to improve the arrangements where genuinely there are terrorists who may be under their jurisdiction to ensure that the procedures that exist between the two countries operate fairly and effectively.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

4. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement on the Anglo-Irish agreement.

5. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the issues discussed at the Anglo-Irish Conference meeting on Tuesday 11 March.

Mr. Tom King: A further meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference took place in Belfast on 11 March. It was useful and constructive. The issues discussed are set out in the joint statement, issued after the meeting, which I have placed in the Library. In addition to the joint statement, I gave a press conference afterwards to answer questions on the matters discussed.

Mr. Dubs: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the Anglo-Irish agreement could be significantly enhanced if there were closer relationships between this House and the Dail in Dublin? Will he therefore use his influence, nothwithstanding the fact that it is more a matter for the House than for the Government, to ensure that an Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier is established as quickly as possible? Misunderstandings between London and Dublin would thereby be reduced and the basis for the Anglo-Irish agreement would have much more support.

Mr. King: As the hon. Gentleman rightly said, it is a matter for the House and, obviously, not one that falls to me. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has explained the Government's view to the House.

Mr. Alton: Given the concern registered by Dr. Garret FitzGerald during his recent visit to the United Kingdom about the continued discharges of radioactive waste from Sellafield, was that issue discussed at the last meeting of the intergovernmental body? If not, will it be on the agenda of the next meeting? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the report of the Select Committee on the Environment on the discharge of radioactive waste should be considered, and that the continuation of discharges, which is making the Irish sea the most radioactive body of water in the world, is undermining good Anglo-Irish relations?

Mr. King: I do not think that that sort of emotive comment is particularly helpful or objective in any scientific terms. On the issue of Sellafield, there is a Republic interest, as it were, in the island of Ireland in relation to the mainland. Radioactive waste was not discussed at the meeting. It is principally a matter for consideration between the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of the Republic. It is not specifically a Northern Ireland matter.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: While it may be encouraging to my right hon. Friend that there have been useful discussions with the Irish Government, is it not a tragedy, and perhaps somewhat understandable, that we still have no active participation in this House by the Official Unionist and the Democratic Unionist parties? Can something be done to encourage those parties back to the House, as their absence from the Chamber—the reasons for which I understand—is difficult to defend to the rest of the country as we are, after all, one united country?

Mr. King: I certainly share to the full the concern expressed by my hon. Friend about the absence of the Unionist Members from the Parliament of the United Kingdom, for which they recently stood for re-election, but in which, in the majority, they have declined to take part. I should like to repeat a sentiment which echoes the strong feelings of a substantial number of Unionists in the Province about the letter from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), in which she invited them to enter into talks without preconditions to discuss their concerns to seek ways to make progress. All sensible people of goodwill will recognise that either there will be talks or there will be more serious consequences if the situation is allowed to drift and if the present impasse is allowed to continue.

I hope that I can say from the Dispatch Box, on behalf of the Government and, I hope, with the support of all hon. Members, that there must be talks. I hope that the Unionist Members will accept the invitation from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and enter into talks as soon as possible.

Mr. Favell: Will there be any discussions in those talks on the integration of schoolchildren of different religious persuasions? After all, the problems in the southern States of America—the Klu Klux Klan and the extreme Right — were only resolved finally by the bussing of schoolchildren.

Mr. King: As my hon. Friend knows, there has been some progress in that connection. However, the principle of parental choice is one which the Government have respected. This is a very difficult issue which has not arisen so far in the Conference, although I completely understand why my hon. Friend sees the matter as one of the most important developments that could take place.

Mr. Frank Cook: Does the Secretary of State mean by his last reply that he seeks the demolition of the dual system of education?

Mr. King: I do not know how on earth the hon. Gentleman could have drawn that conclusion from my remarks.

Mr. Gow: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in her letter of 21 March to the Leader of the Ulster Unionist party my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that she was prepared to consider operating the Anglo-Irish agreement in what she described as "a sensitive way"? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that there is nothing in the agreement which states that the secretariat — the agreement's word, not mine—has to be in the Province, nothing which states that the meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference at ministerial level must be held in the Province, and nothing which requires Ministers to meet every month?

Mr. King: The agreement, as my hon. Friend recognises, refers to regular and frequent meetings. The communiqué states that meetings will normally be held in Belfast, but what my hon. Friend has said is otherwise technically correct. What we need to do, and this is all part of the discussions that need to be held, is to explore the ways in which the Unionists can become involved and meet some of their concerns and anxieties about the present situation.

Mr. Bell: May I say from the Opposition Benches that we deeply regret the fact that elected representatives of Northern Ireland are not here in their rightful place to discuss the affairs of Northern Ireland today? May we also associate ourselves with the remarks of the Secretary of State in connection with the invitation given by the Prime Minister to the Unionist parties? It is right and proper that they should take up that invitation for further talks. There is nothing in the Anglo-Irish agreement or in the Conference that prevents Unionist leaders from talking to the elected Government of the United Kingdom.

Mr. King: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's comments. The Government made it clear through the Prime Minister's letter that we recognise the Unionists' opposition to the Anglo-Irish agreement and that any subsequent talks would be without prejudice to that position. We are prepared to talk on any or all of the matters that were mentioned when my right hon. Friend

the Prime Minister and I previously met the two leaders of the Unionist party, including matters on which the agreement has no bearing. We have made what we hope is as helpful a response as possible to the Unionist leaders, recognising the realities of their position and the realities of the agreement.

It would be absolutely tragic if, in the face of that offer, the Unionist leaders were not even prepared to come and talk without pre-conditions or prejudice to their position. That is a step which must be taken, and I hope that they will respond in that way.

Education Budget

8. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the proposed budget for the Northern Ireland Department of Education for 1986-87; and how this compares with the budget for 1985-86.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): The proposed budget is £662 million—an increase of £42 million.

Mr. Favell: Given the pressure on education and library board budgets for next year, is my hon. Friend satisfied that sufficient progress is being made in the rationalisation of school places?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is on to a good point. There is over-provision of school places, especially in Belfast, and we need to continue an orderly rationalisation process. One of the reasons why we are not getting full benefit from our best-ever teacher-pupil ratios is that teachers are spread too thinly over too many schools.

Mr. Archer: Does the Minister appreciate that while he boasts of the increased resources available to education, talk in the local communities is about how many school cleaners will lose their jobs, how many dinner ladies can expect redundancy notices, how many nursery places will be left after the cuts, whether the Belfast school of music can continue the activities expected in a major city, and whether school buildings will receive any attention other than the most basic repairs? Has he ever felt sufficiently curious to consider why there is such a discrepancy in the picture given by his accountants and what is actually happening in the schools?

Dr. Mawhinney: First, I am not boasting, I am simply relating the facts of the case. Secondly, I am aware of the matters that the right hon. and learned Member has mentioned, some of which were raised when I met representatives of some of the boards during the process that they have to undertake to determine their budget allocation proposals, which they then submit to me. So far, although I believe that some of the budget proposals have reached the Department, I have not seen any of them.

Mr. Lilley: Will my hon. Friend comment on the fact that in the school system in Northern Ireland, which has retained a large measure of selection, performance as measured by examination results and otherwise is now far superior to that of schools on the mainland? Will he draw from that fact conclusions from which schools on the mainland might benefit and reflect on the advantages to employers who may wish to employ people in Northern Ireland?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the better A-level results that are emerging from the Province compared with schools in England, but he will bear in mind that across the breadth of the educational spectrum results in Northern Ireland vary.

United States Financial Aid

9. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects Northern Ireland to be in receipt of the first tranche of promised American financial aid; and what are his priorities for its use.

Mr. Scott: Legislation providing for United States assistance to both parts of Ireland is before Congress. I am not in a position to speculate when a Bill will become law or to what use any assistance might be put.

Mr. Wallace: With unemployment in Northern Ireland running at more than 20 per cent., does the Minister agree that the first priority for any additional funds must be the creation of jobs, not through De Lorean-type fiascos, but through investment in small businesses and infrastructure projects? Will he give the House some idea of the total amount expected to be gathered from American aid?

Mr. Scott: I think that it would be premature to speculate about the amount. A number of proposals have been put either to the House of Representatives or to the Senate. Until we see the size of the amounts involved, it is probably wrong to start making plans to spend the money, but I have considerable sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that one of the top priorities for any money that may come through should be the creation of jobs.

Mr. Budgen: Is my hon. Friend aware that many people regard such aid not as generous but as patronising, ignorant and biased? Has he any proposals to offer advice or aid to the Americans in terms of how they might deal with the appalling problems of their inner cities?

Mr. Scott: The short answer to that is no, Sir, but I am sure that if the Americans came to us for advice we would freely give it. Let me make it clear that we entered into the agreement on its merits. There was no question of the United States, or the promise of United States aid, playing any part in the decision of the Government of the United Kingdom to enter into the agreement. Nevertheless, we are grateful to the United States for wishing to acknowledge, and to make a tangible display of acknowledging, the desire of the Governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland to work towards peace and stability in Northern Ireland. The final decisions will, of course, have to await the passage of legislation through Congress.

Mr. Mallon: May I ask the Minister to consider patronising the constituency of Newry and Armagh when the aid becomes available? We would have no objection to that at all.

Does not inward investment into Northern Ireland become very difficult when a Government Department responsible for Government training schemes is presiding over a system in which, out of 116 senior posts, 16 are held by Catholics? Will the Minister ask the Fair Employment Agency to initiate an immediate investigation of that matter so that people who want to invest money in the north of Ireland will not have to look at that sort of thing?

Mr. Scott: My hon. Friends will have heard about the matter raised in the second part of the question and will no doubt consider the situation. I note the hon.

Gentleman's first question, but until we know whether there is to be a fund and how big it will be it is impossible to speculate about the uses to which it might be put.

Mr. Chapman: If, and when, the money comes, will my hon. Friend seriously consider using at least a part of it to mount a publicity campaign to attract industry and jobs to the Province under the slogan, "Come, make your place of work in Northern Ireland. There is far less lawlessness here than there is in the United States"?

Mr. Scott: The Industrial Development Board, in particular, has for some time been conducting a sustained publicity campaign in Great Britain and the United States, clearly pointing out the attractions of Northern Ireland for potential inward investment and paying special attention to the overwhelming normality that is the reality of life for most people in the Province.

Security

10. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the current security situation in the Province.

Mr. Tom King: Since I last answered questions in the House on 27 February, two members of the security forces and one civilian have died in incidents arising from the security situation in the Province. I am sure the whole House will join me in condemning these murders. In addition, more than 100 members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Army have been injured, many of the former duing the shameful events of 3 March.

Since the beginning of the year a total of 55 people have been charged with serious offences, 52 weapons, 2,700 rounds of ammunition and 1,100 lb of explosives have been recovered.

Mr. Maclennan: That is a sombre report. Has the Secretary of State spoken to the GOC about the use of mortar bombs in the attempted attack on the UDR base at Kilkeel on 15 March, and can he make a statement about that?

Mr. King: I have spoken to the GOC about that matter. The mortar attacks have posed a serious threat. The security forces have been anxious to take the most positive steps to ensure proper protection, especially of police stations, which have been subject to attack, and to try to counter that most unattractive technique.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: While I regret the large number of members of the RUC who have been killed over the 50-odd years of problems in Northern Ireland, may I ask my right hon. Friend to accept that the members of the RUC themselves to not wish to be armed, that they feel that because they are armed they are natural targets, and that, further, they feel that they are not totally protected by the rest of the security forces?

Mr. King: That would be the long-term aim, but I, do not think that it is a practical possibility at present.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Will the right hon. Gentleman try to come to an understanding that, whatever happens over Easter and in the weeks beyond, the ultimate responsibility will lie, as ever, with the ambiguities and insincerities of the policy of successive British Governments towards Northern Ireland and its people?

Mr. King: We all have a responsibility at present, not to anticipate trouble, but to seek in every way we can to discourage any such trouble from taking place. I hope that I can look to the right hon. Gentleman, in his position as a Member of this House, to join with all hon. Members in saying that the right way to resolve the difficulties, ambiguities or uncertainties is by discussion and consultation, and that at no time can there be a case for violence and confrontation.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is not the security position in Northern Ireland aggravated by payments to the IRA under kidnap insurance arrangements? Why is it that the Government repeatedly ask me to produce evidence when they know that those policies are being sold, when that is common knowledge in the City, and when it amounts to £400 million worth of business every year? Why do the Government not investigate those matters, which they know are illegal under section 10 of the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1976? Why do they insist on turning a blind eye? Is it that they do not want to do anything about the matter?

Mr. King: Nobody could accuse the Government of not wishing to take every possible step to fight terrorism. As the hon. Gentleman has been told, we are seeking to take every step that we can, but if he has evidence that is not available to us, he should produce it.

Mr. Mallon: Will the Secretary of State confirm that probably one of the most serious security issues at present and for the next few months will be the marches that will take place? Will he confirm that the march which is organised by so-called Loyalists in Portadown for next Monday is nothing more than a coat-trailing exercise in triumphalism, geared to exacerbate sectarian feelings and to promote the type of sectarian strife that we saw last July?

Mr. King: I recognise the tradition of marching that exists in Northern Ireland and the more recent attempts to turn them into deliberately provocative incidents. I hope that all who care about law and order in the Province will recognise the present peculiarly sensitive atmosphere and the risks of such provocation and that all responsible people in the Province will recognise the need to avoid such provocation. I am confident that the RUC will be anxious in its responsibilities, which are clear, and the Chief Constable in his operational responsibility to protect innocent people from such provocation.

Commonwealth Games

12. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his policy towards Belfast seeking to stage the 1994 Commonwealth Games.

Dr. Mawhinney: I welcome the initiative shown by the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Council and the Northern Ireland Assembly in indicating support for staging the games in Northern Ireland, and I have recently established a working party to consider the feasibility of doing so.

Mr. Bellingham: Is my hon. Friend aware that one of the strengths of the Irish is that sport transcends politics and religion? Surely the examples of Barry McGuigan and all-Ireland rugger demonstrate that dramatically? One can add to that the sporting exploits of the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) when he was Secretary

of State for Northern Ireland. In the light of that, surely no effort should be spared in attempts to get the games to Belfast?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am pleased that my hon. Friend shares my enthusiasm at the prospect of the games being staged in Northern Ireland, but he will understand that it is necessary to explore seriously all the various aspects of the staging of the games before a decision is made. That is exactly what I have asked the working party to do, and I hope to receive its report in February 1987.

Mr. Forth: Can my hon. Friend give an undertaking that every effort will be made to seek methods of funding such an activity through the private sector, in order to protect the public purse against the type of damage that can be inflicted on it by unsuccessful events of this type, should they occur?

Dr. Mawhinney: I can assure my hon. Friend that the working party is mindful of the point that he raises, and that it will be part of its deliberations before it writes its report.

Harland and Wolff

13. **Mr. Cash** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many working days have been lost through industrial action in Harland and Wolff in each of the years 1982 to 1985.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Rhodes Boyson): Harland and Wolff has an excellent industrial relations record. In the years in question Harland and Wolff was never closed by strike action. I shall arrange for the detailed figures of man days lost in these years—very low figures indeed—to be published in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Cash: Can my hon. Friend assure the House that the tender submitted by Harland and Wolff for the AOR did not contain any element of subsidy?

Dr. Boyson: I can certainly assure the House of that, as I did when some two weeks ago when questioned by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). We put in PA Management Consultants, an independent and interationally respected firm to review fully the terms of Harland and Wolff's bid. It concluded that the tender was comprehensively costed, contains a profit margin, and did not benefit in any way from cost subsidy.

Mr. Stephen Ross: Anyone who knows John Parker and who has visited Harland and Wolff will know that it is a most up-to-date shipyard and has excellent management. I hope that Ministers are supporting its application for both or at least on of these orders, and I hope, too, that Harland and Wolff will be successful.

Dr. Boyson: I am grateful to the hon. Member for his comment. Obviously Northern Ireland Ministers are supporting Harland and Wolff. Between the first and the fourth of the Blue Star refrigeration cargo ships that were handed over, there was a 22 per cent. increase in productivity. Apart from one ship, which suffered fire damage while it was being built, they were all delivered on time. Northern Ireland Ministers are supporting the bid by Harland and Wolff. It is a competitive bid without any subsidies.

Mr. Fallon: Will my hon. Friend confirm that public spending last year on industry and unemployment in Northern Ireland was some 404 per cent. higher per capita than it was in England? Does he accept that there will be strong resentment in the north-east of England if this order is stolen from Tyneside because of public subsidy in Northern Ireland?

Dr. Boyson: If my hon. Friend had listened to my earlier reply, he would have heard me say that PA Mangagement Consultants has gone into this. There is no cross-subsidisation. It is a genuine tender that was economically worked out. Hon Members in all parts of the House have recognised for a long time that Northern Ireland has a problem of extremely high unemployment. As money is switched from the Treasury to areas in the north-east and to other areas because of depression and high unemployment, Northern Ireland, as one of those areas of high unemployment and economic difficulty, has also received money.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Is the Minister aware of the consequences to Swan Hunter of not getting this order? It will result in 2,000 redundancies on Tyneside. He has given the House assurances about costings and cross-subsidies, but if what he says turns out not to be true and Harland and Wolff obtains the order, who will pick up the price tag? Will it not be the British taxpayer?

Dr. Boyson: All hon. Members are aware that if one shipyard gets a contract another one does not. I have sympathy for the people who are made redundant in any shipyard. This competition is between a shipyard in the north-east, in the hon. Member's constituency, and Harland and Wolff in Northern Ireland. In the opinion of Northern Ireland Ministers and, I am sure, in the opinion of all Government Ministers, the judgment should be made on the basis of which of the tenders is the fairer, which offers the better delivery date, the yard from which the better ship is likely to come and the one which provides the lower cost to the Exchequer.

I shall not try to evade any of the points made by the hon. Member. I say to him that it will not be the British taxpayer who subsidises this order. This is a defence contract and, for that reason, must have a built-in profit margin. One of the problems for Harland and Wolff is that, in comparison with other shipyards, it has been dependent upon ordinary cargo shipping, and until recently has not had any defence contracts. I am sure that all hon. Members are aware that there is probably not a shipyard in the world able to build civil shipping at a profit. All our shipyards depend for profit on defence contracts.

Following are the figures:

	Man days lost	*Man days lost per worker*	*Man hours lost as per cent. of total*
1982	124	0·95	0·052
1983	865	7·78	0·436
1984	207	2·06	0·116
1985	159	1·71	0·096

	Number
Work force at	
1982-83	6,162
1983-84	5,309
1984-85	4,998

One-day Strike

14. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the estimated cost to *(a)* the public purse and *(b)* private individuals of the damage caused during the course of the one-day strike on Monday 3 March.

Mr. Scott: Full information is not yet available. However, up to 14 March, 491 notices of intention to claim compensation for damage to property had been served on my right hon. Friend. The cost of police overtime is estimated at £470,000. There is no doubt that the events of 3 March caused grave damage to Northern Ireland, both financially and in terms of its reputation.

Mr. Ross: I hope that wide publicity will be given to the Minister's answer and that we shall get more detailed information when the size of the claims that have been submitted are known. May I express the hope that the politicians in Northern Ireland who helped to organise the day of strike will take note of the figures and understand that the rest of the country feels great anger about the figures that are likely to be involved?

Mr. Scott: I would wish to echo that sentiment. Many disgraceful things happened on 3 March and grave damage was done to the reputation of Northern Ireland in the wider world. I hope that there will be no repetition of it.

Dr. Godman: As it has been alleged that certain UDR personnel were involved in the disturbances, may I remind the Secretary of State that he said earlier today that he was quite unaware of the charge that one of his junior Ministers had sought to dissuade Conservative Members of the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill from taking oral evidence from the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon)? Will the Secretary of State investigate this most serious charge and report to the House?

Mr. Scott: I find myself in exactly the same position as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I have no knowledge of the charge to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. The allegations that members of the UDR were involved in what took place on 3 March are being investigated by the appropriate authorities.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 March.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having meetings with ministerial colleagues and others later today.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Prime Minister take time out of her busy day today to study the positions that are being taken by various countries contributing to the multi-fibre arrangement talks that will take place next week in Geneva? Is she aware of the potential damage that could be done to the domestic market, in which substantial firms in my constituency, such as Pringle of Hawick and Barrie Knitwear, operate, if the volume of imports outwith the EEC is much increased beyond existing levels? Will the right hon. Lady give us an assurance that she will use her authority to try to sustain the limits that are set out in the current EEC mandate, so that they cannot be breached in the bilateral discussions that will flow from next week's talks? Will she seek to use her influence with her American friends to try to make them less isolationist, so that they get together with the EEC negotiators to establish a fair framework of international textile trading?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is talking about an extremely important series of negotiations that are to start in Geneva next week. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs set the mandate in great detail — the hon. Gentleman will know that these documents are decided in great detail. Therefore, the negotiations must take place within that detailed mandate. The negotiators would have to go back for another one if it were to be altered.

I do not think that there is any point in trying to put pressure on the United States at the moment. It is possible that it will make its position clear once the negotiations have started. We shall, of course, take an interest in its position, which will be extremely important for many of our constituencies.

Mr. Sims: Has my right hon. Friend noted that in the course of the Easter recess the Greater London council will cease to exist, with the result that many London ratepayers will be receiving rate demands that will be substantially lower than those of previous years? Would she care to draw the attention of Londoners to the close association between these two events?

The Prime Minister: Being a London Member, I am very much aware of what my hon. Friend has said. The GLC will go out of existence. It has long outlived its usefulness because so many of its duties have been transferred to other bodies or other councils. I agree with my hon. Friend that the ratepayers of London are already breathing a sigh of relief at the extinction of the GLC.

Mr. Kinnock: As the right hon. Lady is a London Member, does she think that, on the day on which an authoritative report is published showing that 600,000 people in the London boroughs are either homeless or without a secure home, it is just or sensible that her Government have intervened to prevent the expenditure of necessary moneys on the improvement of properties throughout those London boroughs?

The Prime Minister: The Government have an excellent record in the private and public sector. The number of renovations has exceeded those under the previous Government, and there are already more houses. I suggest that the right hon. Gentleman also looks at the number of council properties that are vacant, some of which have been vacant for over a year.

Mr. Kinnock: The Government have the worst ever record on housing. They have made a 59 per cent. cut in public spending on housebuilding and house improvement in the public sector since they first came into office, and they have betrayed the needs of old and young people who require accommodation. Instead of resorting to the kinds of words that she does, why does the right hon. Lady not take note of the reports of the Duke of Edinburgh, the Department of the Environment and the Church of England, which say that priority should be given to a real housing programme?

The Prime Minister: There are well over 1 million more dwellings than there were during the lifetime of the

previous Government, and house improvements in the public and private sector far exceed those under the previous Government.

Sir Hugh Rossi: If, as a result of recent problems regarding extradition, it is decided to make changes within the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, will my right hon. Friend ensure that recruitment does not take place from among those who advise the Leader of the Opposition on expulsions from the Labour party?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes his point very effectively.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Does the Prime Minister find it acceptable that the armed forces of the United States should violate the mainland territory of an independent country in North Africa, and will she distance the United Kingdom from that action?

The Prime Minister: As I said on Tuesday, I believe that the United States is absolutely within its rights to keep international waters and airspace open. When there is an unwarranted attack on aircraft in international air space from the land of another country, the United States has the right to defend its planes under article 51.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Will my right hon. Friend try to persuade President Reagan to turn his attention away from his Libyan sideshow towards the fundamental problem in the middle east — the future of the Palestinians? Does she agree that the absence of any form of diplomatic peace process in the middle east, when combined with the growing repression on the West Bank and in Gaza, where there have been increased deportations and detentions without trial, can only fuel international terrorism and bring the prospect of armed conflict in the middle east that bit closer?

The Prime Minister: I agree that the fact that there are no negotiations in prospect at the moment over resolving the main Arab-Israeli problem is a cause of great concern. Since the initiative of King Hussein of Jordan broke down there has not been another, other than the agreement at Camp David some time ago, which the United States may think fit to revive. I share my hon. Friend's concern.

Q2. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Maclennan: Following the Prime Minister's decision to wipe out those local authorities with whose policies she disagrees, and the failure of the Leader of the Opposition to curb the cancerous spread of fundamentalist extremism within the Labour party, will she seek to protect local democracy in Britain by trusting the people and introducing a fair and proportional voting system?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir. I note what the hon. Gentleman says about, in effect, the GLC, and I note that his constituency is about as far from London as it could possibly be.

Mr. McQuarrie: In the course of my right hon. Friend's busy day, will she take time to read the national press about the shambles in the Labour party——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That might just about have to do with Prime Ministerial responsibility.

Mr. McQuarrie: Will my right hon. Friend find time to read the national press, where she will find some very interesting information about the Labour party, which illustrates clearly the danger that this country would face if we had a Labour Government—an unlikely event—with a Labour Prime Minister who was not in control of his own party?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend's analysis, but I am sure he will understand when I say that I have more important things to do than to read those reports.

Mr. Foot: Should not the Prime Minister and the country as a whole be deeply concerned about the frustration and abandonment of the international treaties stopping the testing of nuclear weapons? What action do the Government intend to take immediately to try to restore the effectiveness of those treaties, bearing in mind that we are treaty bound to try to ensure that such a system is re-established, or is this just another matter on which she prefers to take instructions from the President of the United States?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir. But the right hon. Gentleman is correct to say that the comprehensive test ban treaty negotiations are not proceeding at any pace at all. They have come up against difficulties in verification. There have recently been proposals about offers to discuss verification, with a view to American ratification of the peaceful nuclear explosive treaty and the threshold test ban treaty. But those included particular aspects of verification depending upon some of the latest discoveries and upon new technical forms of verification which have recently been made possible.

Totnes

Q3. **Mr. Steen** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Totnes.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Mr. Steen: When the Prime Minister does visit Totnes, will she ensure that she visits the Waterside development, where she will see that derelict warehouses have been renovated to a high standard thanks to a local entrepreneur with a great sense of civic pride and thanks to local people with a sense of community and conservation? If that sense of civic pride were transferred to inner city neighbourhoods, might it not go a long way towards restoring morale and be far more effective than pumping yet more public money into the inner cities?

The Prime Minister: I know of that scheme and I agree with my hon. Friend's analysis. It is an excellent scheme that has been led by the private sector, helped by a certain amount of public money and pursued with the total dedication of the local community. I agree that such a scheme would go a long way towards helping the problems of inner cities. I am sure that my hon. Friend will have read with the greatest interest the Chief Rabbi's report on inner cities, and will have agreed with most of the things that he said.

Dr. Owen: Now that, after the Budget, the Gallup poll has shown — [HON. MEMBERS: "Totnes."] I am not going to speak in the House, Mr speaker, against a constant barrage—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman has as much right to be heard as have other right hon. and hon. Members.

Hon. Members: Totnes.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman's question is, I hope, related to Totnes.

Dr. Owen: Now that the Gallup poll following the Budget has confirmed that the SDP/Liberal alliance is in the lead—a situation that has already been confirmed by the electors of Totnes, who have chosen the SDP/Liberal alliance to control Devon county council—is it not clear that the people of this country will not be so easily bribed, and are more interested in an economic recovery and in getting people back to work than in seeing 1p being taken off the standard rate of tax?

The Prime Minister: I think I am right in saying that the rates have gone up in that area as a result of alliance control.

Mr. Lilley: Will my right hon. Friend reflect on the opinion poll—doubtless influenced by the electors of Totnes — which shows that 80 per cent. of the population supported the decision to cut the rate of income tax by 1p?

The Prime Minister: I take note of that. This Government's achievements have been made, not by twisting and turning with every opinion poll, but by carrying out with persistence and perseverance the policies upon which we were elected.

Engagements

Q4. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fisher: What advice can the Prime Minister give to her party's candidate in the Fulham by-election to help him when addressing the 30 per cent. of the electorate who are the private tenants of absentee landlords? Why cannot private tenants have the same right to buy as council tenants?

The Prime Minister: It is not the Government's job to give away private property—*[Interruption.]* I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman approves of the sale of council houses, but it is not possible, under totally different circumstances, to deprive private citizens of their freedoms.

Business of the House

10.31 am

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for the week after the Easter recess?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): The business for the first week after the Adjournment will be as follows:

TUESDAY 8 APRIL—Remaining stages of the Dockyard Services Bill.

WEDNESDAY 9 APRIL—Progress on remaining stages of the Airports Bill.

THURSDAY 10 APRIL—Until about seven o'clock, completion of remaining stages of the Airports Bill, followed by remaining stages of the Armed Forces Bill.

FRIDAY 11 APRIL—Private Members' Bills.

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. He will recall that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry assured the House on Tuesday that no further decisions affecting BL would be taken during the Easter recess. Can the right hon. Gentleman confirm that before any further moves are made there will be a full debate as speedily as possible after the recess so that hon. Members in all parts of the House can make their opinions known on the issue, which is critical for the regions and for the whole economy?

Last week I asked the right hon. Gentleman for a foreign affairs debate to be held immediately after the recess. That has become more pressing because of the clash between units of the American sixth fleet and Libya and the decision by President Reagan to send $20 million worth of support as a back-door way of financing the terrorist contest on the border between Honduras and Nicaragua. Can the right hon. Gentleman assure me that a foreign affairs debate will be held shortly after the recess so that we can take those and other matters into account?

Will the right hon. Gentleman also arrange, soon after the recess, a debate on the Government's attitude to the introduction of a poll tax, which the Prime Minister favours, especially in view of the evidence from the Institute of Local Government Studies that in an average inner London borough such as Hammersmith and Fulham the average rate bill of £277 per head would rise under a poll tax to £510 per head—an 84 per cent. increase?

Hon. Members: Those figures are wrong.

Mr. Biffen: There is a mild element of disagreement about the right hon. Gentleman's final remark. A Green Paper has been issued on that topic. Through the usual channels we can consider when it would be appropriate to proceed to a debate.

As the right hon. Gentleman knows, I have conveyed my sympathy about having a foreign affairs debate reasonably soon. Perhaps through the usual channels we can consider the timing of it. The right hon. Gentleman is right that the motion for such a debate should be drawn in such terms as to enable the widest possible consideration of the many topics which excite public concern.

I cannot helpfully add to what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has already said about the appropriateness of a debate on BL once discussions are concluded, but I take account of what the right hon. Gentleman says.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Since the Committee stage of the Building Societies Bill finished at the end of February, when may we expect its Report stage? Before then, will my right hon. Friend ask the Economic Secretary to continue the excellent procedure which he adopted in Committee of producing detailed amendments and proposals as early as possible so that they can be discussed?

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly pass my hon. Friend's comments to my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary. They will be much appreciated. My hon. Friend will have noticed that the business for the first week back signals our desire that a number of Bills be passed to the other place. My hon. Friend should view the prospects of the Building Societies Bill in that way.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Is the Leader of the House aware that the independent review body has determined in favour of the National Coal Board's plans for the Hawthorn complex in the north-east? The community will be greatly affected by the decision with the loss of 300 jobs, and the unemployment level will be at about 33 per cent.

Is the Leader of the House aware that the decisions on the Bates colliery and the Horden colliery and the recent decision on the Eppleton colliery mean that people see the independent review body as a charade. The last drop of credibility has finally gone down the drain. However, there is one opportunity left for recovery. The National Coal Board has yet to make its final decision. Will the right hon. Gentleman give me a guarantee that the Government will lean on the NCB to save vital jobs in my constituency?

Mr. Biffen: I am not sure that I am the most natural leaner in the Government. However, I will pass the hon. Gentleman's anxieties to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Has my right hon. Friend had time to consider the findings of the report of the Select Committee on the Environment in which considerable doubts were cast on the suitability of present methods of disposing of intermediate and low-level nuclear waste? In view of the considerable research that went into that report, will my right hon. Friend agree to defer the laying of the special development order, especially as it concerns Fulbeck which is near my constituency, until the full recommendations of the report have been investigated and debated in the House?

Mr. Biffen: I refer my hon. Friend to the remarks I made in the recess Adjournment motion debate. What was said then was said with measured tones, and I have nothing to add to it.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The one notable omission from the business of the House on our return is the Second Reading of the Shops Bill.

On Tuesday the Leader of the House said that he considered that people earn their rest over Easter—he was referring to hon. Members. Can the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that the Government will reconsider their present position on de-restricted Sunday trading? Will he ensure that when we come back he will say that, having thought about it, he and the Patronage Secretary will allow their colleagues to vote on the matter

as a matter of conscience and not insist, as he has so far, that there is a Government three-line or two-line Whip on the legisation?

Mr. Biffen: I am happy to say that conscience is entirely the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary. That puts him in a uniquely capable position for holding that responsibility. As to any future announcement on the Second Reading of the Shops Bill, it will proceed in the natural manner.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend note that I speak as a non-smoker, but I call for an open debate on taxation policy relating to smoking. People have a right to choose to smoke, although they know of the hazards to their health in so doing. Will he take special note of the pressure of the Liberal and Labour parties to increase taxation on smokers and to deprive people of smoking in all sorts of places where it is not unreasonable to do so? Provision has been made for non-smoking areas. If such provision is made for the comfort of non-smokers, is it not appropriate that proper account should be taken of people's right to smoke if they wish to do so?

Mr. Biffen: I am certain my hon. Friend is right to imply that the recent Budget changes have a significant impact on the tobacco industry and those it employs. I suggest that the most appropriate circumstances for such a debate will be on the relevant clause of the Finance Bill, although it is not appropriate for me to tell him which clauses will be taken upstairs and which downstairs. I think that the matters to which he referred make the relevant clause a candidate for consideration downstairs.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Will the Leader of the House tell us why he chose to list the Dockyard Services Bill for its Report stage on the Tuesday we come back, given that the Public Accounts Committee has held an investigation into the royal naval dockyards and the fact that significant documents for our consideration of the Bill will not be available until the Monday following the date listed? The PAC's report will not be available until about 22 April. Will the right hon. Gentleman ask the Secretary of State for Defence what his hurry was, and what he was trying to hide?

Mr. Biffen: It is a question of neither hurry nor hide but of a generous and liberal interpretation of what might be for the best convenience of the House, with the business and the whipping that has developed on the first day back. The hon. Gentleman advises delay and mentions documents dated 22 April, but it is unrealistic to think in terms of holding back the legislation that far, bearing in mind the fact that its passage in another place is still to follow.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Has my right hon. Friend seen on the Order Paper early-day motion 538?

[That this House calls upon the Government to seek to amend the Shops Bill [Lords] so as to preserve the special character of Sunday and to have regard for the principles and conscience of those who would be affected by the total deregulation of Sunday trading.]

The motion has been signed by nearly 70 of my right hon. and hon. Friends, and opposes the Government's intention totally to deregulate Sunday trading. Is he aware that, if the Government thought that they had problems with their Back-Benchers over Westland and Land Rover, he ain't seen nothing yet? Will he consider that the best way in which the Government might honourably get themselves off the hook is by granting their own Members a free vote?

Mr. Biffen: I thought it generous of my hon. Friend, having used such military language, to end with a request that he knows perfectly well I cannot grant but can be granted only by my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): In view of the considerable anxieties that have been expressed in the Chamber in the past week about the placement of the AOR lead vessel contract, will the Leader of the House find time for us to debate that matter before the final decision is made? Will he consider having a debate about the principle of privatised warship yards having to compete with subsidised state-owned industry?

Mr. Biffen: If eloquence could secure the placing of the order for that ship, the contribution by the hon. Gentleman the other evening would have secured it for the north-east——

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Give it to him, then.

Mr. Biffen: Alas, I am a creature of market forces. Of course, the point that the hon. Gentleman made about the parliamentary handling of the business will be borne in mind, but I cannot hold out very much hope.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Would it not be helpfull if, before the Fulham by-election, the House had a full debate on the chronic state of the Labour party?

Mr. Biffen: There are some things that cannot even be improved by debate.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Did the Leader of the House hear the exchanges during Prime Minister's Question Time about the important negotiations on the renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement, and the Prime Minister's confirmation of the importance of those negotiations for the textile and clothing industry? Can the right hon. Gentleman give an undertaking that a statement will be made in the week when we return updating hon. Members on the current state of the negotiations?

Mr. Biffen: I recognise, as all the House will, the importance of the MFA discussions, and I shall certainly refer to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry the hon. Gentleman's request.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): Has my right hon. Friend noted recent reports that British Airways is to replace air hostesses with northern accents, based in Manchester, with air hostesses from London? When can the House have an opportunity to debate this blatant example of regional discrimination so that we can make it clear that if BA is privatised my constituents from the north will have an equal chance to apply for shares?

Mr. Biffen: I was not aware of that quite breathtaking development. I agree that if we are to have endless debates, which I fear we will, from time to time we need a little break into reality. What my hon. Friend suggests is one of the more cheerful aspects of regional policy.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Has the Leader of the House taken time to look at early-day motions 204 and 217 about speech therapists which are signed by hon. Members on both sides of the House?

[Mr. Doug Hoyle]

[That this House notes with concern that speech therapists, members of a highly-skilled caring profession, discharging a wide range of responsibilities, are underpaid in comparison with other National Health Service professionals doing work of equal value; notes also that speech therapy is traditionally a female profession; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to provide sufficient funds to enable speech therapists' salary levels to be increased so that speech therapists receive equal pay for work of equal value.]

[That this House expresses its appreciation of the valuable work performed by speech therapists; and, in expressing its concern that decreasing comparative salary levels will dissuade the ablest of individuals from entering this profession, calls upon Her Majesty's Government to ensure that speech therapists are remunerated at a level equal to that of other graduate specialists within the National Health Service.]

They draw attention to the very low pay and conditions of those highly qualified people and their effect on recruitment, not only in my constituency but in all constituencies. I know that this matter was drawn to the attention of the Leader of the House by my right hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) during the debate on the Easter recess motion. Will the Leader of the House press the Secretary of State for Social Services to make an early statement to the House after the Easter recess?

Mr. Biffen: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has referred to the contribution made by his right hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin). I shall certainly refer to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services the fact that there is interest in a statement being made.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): As everyone has agreed that the present regulations on Sunday trading are ridiculous, is not the burden of proof on those who are opposed to total deregulation to make suggestions which are sensible, workable and enforceable? Therefore, will my right hon. Friend ensure that there is plenty of time on Second Reading of the Shops Bill to give them an opportunity to put those suggestions to the House? In the absence of such suggestions, is not the only logical and intellectual conclusion that total deregulation is the only way forward?

Mr. Biffen: I could answer that question only by heightening controversy when I am required to pretend that it hardly exists.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is the Leader of the House aware that when the PAC examined in private session the subject of dockyards and the privatisation of dockyards there were clearly matters raised which would be of importance during the debate which is to take place a week on Tuesday? In so far as it is probable that the PAC would wish to publish much of the evidence taken in private session without sidelining, why cannot the debate be delayed to ensure that the maximum possible information is made available to hon. Members?

Mr. Biffen: I think that I dealt with that issue in my response to the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam). I shall bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's comments in the context of the Bill eventually being considered in another place and with the possibilty of its being reconsidered in the House.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): May we have an early debate on industrial relations in the newspaper industry so that the Labour party may end its hypocritical, silence over the way in which Mr. Maxwell appears to run his newspapers?

Mr. Biffen: I am not sure about the silence being hypocritical but it is definitely spasmodic. At the moment, no provision has been made for such a debate, but I agree that it must be a lively candidate.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Will the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for Social Services to give some thought during the recess to making the lot of the 2,500 partially sighted children in this country better rather than worse by the proposed changes in the supply of their specialised spectacles and lenses? The proposed changes are causing great distress to their families and teachers. It is a small group of people. The matter should not be left to a voucher system because that will not cover the cost of their necessarily specialised equipment.

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly draw that point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Mr. Peter Lilley (St. Albans): May I support the plea of my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) for an early debate on industrial relations in the newspaper industry? Surely the House should have an opportunity to consider the strange fact that the dispute in Wapping has led to a threat to free speech in the shape of the refusal of the Labour party to have any dealings with Mr. Murdoch, whereas the dispute in Glasgow has led to no such action? Should we not have the opportunity to investigate whether that is because of any financial relationship between Mr. Maxwell and the Labour party?

Mr. Biffen: The attractiveness of the debate increases every moment, and it is already being outlined as going much wider than the newspapers of Mr. Rupert Murdoch. I am sure that if we cannot contrive to find time for such a debate, particularly over the next few days and during the period of the Fulham by-election, the Labour party will take an early opportunity to make an explicit statement about where it stands on the two newspaper actions by the two newspaper tycoons.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): Is the Leader of the House aware that concern about the auxiliary oil replenishment vessel order is felt not only in Tyneside but stretches to Yorkshire, where concern is felt among component suppliers, such as those in my constituency?

May I refer the Leader of the House to the business on the Thursday evening? Why are the Government so sensitive that they feel that they must gag the House, as they used their majority to gag the Select Committee when it looked at the terms and conditions of employment in the armed forces? Why are we to have a debate on Thursday night, less than 24 hours after the publication of the Select Committee's report? Is it not an insult to the House to expect it to be able to read that report and put down appropriate amendments, which by then will all be starred

amendments, for the debate on Thursday? It is a deplorable way to treat the House. It is typical of the Government's arrogance and of the way in which they are using their majority.

Mr. Biffen: There is no question of gag or censorship in what is being proposed. What has been proposed is perfectly reasonable and is consistent with precedent. I have no doubt that on the Floor of the House there will be a lively debate between those who wish to defend the bravery and integrity of the Ulster Defence Regiment and those who wish to disparage it.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): As a self-confessed creature of market forces, will my right hon. Friend reaffirm his faith and that of the Government in free trade and the free movement of not only goods and services but capital as the great engine of economic prosperity? If that is the position, does my right hon. Friend feel that it is time that the House debated at a very early stage the reaffirmation of our faith in the free movement of goods, capital and services by extensive United Kingdom investment in the United States? Does he not believe that the House should be given the opportunity to reaffirm that prosperity can come yet again from extensive American investment, when the Americans believe it to be right and justified, in growth points of British industry?

Mr. Biffen: Perhaps I should define my position as a traditional high Tory with a fastidious leaning towards market forces. I am the kind of Tory who will be very much influenced by the persuasive speech that my hon. Friend has just made, but I think that it has to stand alone and unique and must not be cluttered up by more general debate.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Will the Leader of the House bring to the attention of the relevant Ministers the fact that the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan counties will put at risk the funding of dozens of citizens advice bureaux throughout the country, bureaux which last year dealt with 300,000 inquiries about fuel, mainly fuel poverty, that with the privatisation of the gas industry the rights of the consumer councils will be diminished and that between the two the needs and the rights of consumers are being eroded further by the Government?

Mr. Biffen: I take account of what the hon. Lady says, but I do not think that she will be entirely surprised if I have a certain agnosticism about what she implies. However, I shall most certainly refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, because it relates to serious consumer issues.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): When shall we have an additional follow-up debate on local government so that we may look again at rates and propaganda, in particular, in Leicester, where, despite an additional £300,000 having been given to the city of Leicester, it has still levied an 80 per cent. rates rise? To try to get round the propaganda rules, the city of Leicester has set up its own publicity company to ensure that it can still spend more than £300,000 of ratepayers' money each year.

Will my right hon. Friend set a lead for the rest of the country by stating that it will be the intention of the House not to sit on 23 July, when Prince Andrew marries Miss Sarah Ferguson?

Mr. Biffen: For the headline of this afternoon or this morning, I congratulate my hon. Friend. All I can say is that that particular privilege is not within my gift. However, I take account of his concern. As he would rightly observe, we have far fewer public holidays than do most countries on the continent of Europe. This provides a chance to redress the imbalance.

As to the question of local authority behaviour and the use of the rates, my hon. Friend took part—I think formidably and constructively—in our debate earlier this week. I cannot guarantee very much shortly after our return. However, as the Leader of the Opposition has reminded us, a debate on the Green Paper will be required at some point.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): The Leader of the House mentioned the Fulham by-election. He will probably not remember, because he was in his pram at the time, that the last time that the Labour party fought a by-election in Fulham was when Edith Summerskill kicked out the Tories in the 1938 by-election and gained a massive majority. That was the last time that Labour won the seat from the Tories in Fulham. No doubt that event will be repeated when we fight the Fulham by-election in about two weeks' time.

What I really want to ask the Leader of the House is this. He has no doubt held many interesting conversations with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy on the vexed question of the colliery review procedure. I have asked him about this on several occasions. Only today, one of my hon. Friends asked him a further question about it. The Leader of the House says that he speaks for the Secretary of State for Energy on this procedure. What do the Government intend to do about it? Do they intend to maintain the existing machinery in reference to pit closures, or is it to be dismantled or amended? What steps are the Government taking? The procedure is falling wholly into disrepute. The National Coal Board does not pay any attention to the recommendations, and the Leader of the House guffaws, smirks and simpers. However, this is a very serious matter for the coal miners, who are affected by a ferocious programme of pit closures. What is the Government's position, briefly?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman very generously draws attention to the gap in our ages, which I acknowledge. I should only like to plead in self-defence that there is no corresponding gap in maturity. As to the independent review body, only my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy can state the Government's policy on this matter. I shall represent to him the concern, which I know extends beyond the hon. Gentleman, that a statement should be made on this matter.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): In relation to the next allotted day for the alliance, does my right hon. Friend, whose Tory credentials are impeccable, agree, in the light of the answer that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), after reading the recently published book by the leader of the Social Democratic Party, "A United Kingdom", that he pinched for one of his chapters the title "Trust the People", a phrase of Lord Randolph Churchill, and that many of the policies contained in the book could easily have been written by a five year old?

Mr. Biffen: I am not sure how that relates to Lord Randolph Churchill. The fascinating contribution of the

[Mr. Biffen]

right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) is a clear indication that he is paving the way to a Labour party which is bereft of Militant, so that the real challenge from the Left in this country will come from an increasingly united alliance and Labour party.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall call those hon. Members who have been standing, but we must finish these questions at 11 o'clock, so may we have questions about business next week and not about the Fulham by-election or about books that we might read during the recess?

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Is the Leader of the House aware that most people in this country view with abhorrence President Reagan's support of terrorism in Nicaragua and Angola and American aggression in the Mediterranean? Will he therefore give a more positive response to the request of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition that, as a matter of urgency, there should be a foreign policy debate in the House?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman is entitled to observe that the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) takes a fairly acerbic view of the American action in Libya and that in that he is joined by the Leader of the Opposition. That is a reasonable political observation. It underlines the variety and the interest that there will be in a foreign affairs debate. I have said that this matter will be considered through the usual channels, and so it shall.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): To support the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), will the right hon. Gentleman draw the attention of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to early-day motion 553, which has been signed by 46 hon. Members, and early-day motion 619, which has been signed by 49 hon. Members?

[That this House recognises the need to achieve a peaceful solution to the problems of Central America; is aware of the importance of the recently signed Carablleda Declaration calling on the end to all foreign aid to irregular forces operating in Central America, the progressive elimination of all foreign forces in the region and the reduction of arms acquisitions; is further aware of the repeated calls of the Contadora countries to cease United States funding of the Contras and of the well-documented, appalling human rights violations by the Contras; calls on the United States Congress to reject President Reagan's request for increased aid, including military aid, to the Contras; calls on the United Kingdom Government to join with other European Economic Community countries to oppose publicly the request for military and other aid; and calls on the United States Administration to stop all efforts designed to bring down the Nicaraguan Government and to resume direct bilateral talks with the Nicaraguan Government which have been unilaterally suspended by the United States of America.]

[That this House is alarmed at the recent revelation of activity by the Contras against the democratically elected government of Nicaragua; is appalled that on 25th January 1985 in Waslala, Zelaya, a group of civilian travellers and children were ambushed on their way to meet President Ortega; is horrified that on 29th June 1984, Paco Sivilla, a teacher from Brownback, was hunted by a group of Contras and his ears, tongue and private parts cut off before he was brutally murdered; is shocked that in July 1984 Adám Flores, a 70-year-old man, was murdered by a force of 70 Contras; further believes that these are a few examples of the most appalling murders by Contra forces against the people of Nicaragua; believes that President Reagan's attempts to send a further $100 million in aid to the Contras can only continue the war and result in further murders of the Nicaraguan people; and accordingly demands that Her Majesty's Government put all possible pressure on President Reagan to cease all support for the Contras and respect the territorial integrity and peaceful wishes of the people of Nicaragua.]

They concern United States support for Contra violence in South America. Will the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary tell the United States that its policies in central America are leading to death, to a continuation of murder and maiming of people and to the invasion of a democratic sovereign country? These matters are important to western Europe and the United Kingdom and should be debated as soon as we return after the Easter recess.

Mr. Biffen: The Leader of the Opposition mentioned Nicaragua as one of the area of conflict that he should like to see included in a foreign affairs debate. I am sure that the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) has taken note of that comment. He may have noted that on Wednesday 9 April, the day on which we return, Foreign and Commonwealth Office questions are at the top of the list.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): If I heard the Leader of the House correctly, he said that we shall consider the remaining stages of the Armed Forces bill on Thursday of the week in which we return. As a member of the Standing Committee on the Bill, I think I am right in saying that the report of the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill will be published on the Wednesday. In view of the disquiet surrounding the chairmanship and deliberations of that Committee, would it not have been more fair and reasonable to allow the House time to debate the report before scrutinising the Bill?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman is a fair controversialist. If from his position here he talks of "disquiet" about the conduct of the Chair, he should either make it clear that he is trying to censure the Chair or accept that the decisions at which the Chair arrived were in order. I take note of what the hon. Gentleman said about the Committee's report being followed immediately by consideration of the remaining stages of the Bill. I think that the situation is manageable.

Honourable Members (Access to House)

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. At the beginning of each Parliament, resolutions are passed on free and easy access to the House. When I arrived today at Carriage Gate, I was told by a policeman that I should wait because the Prime Minister's car was due to arrive. If a car—whether the Prime Minister's or any other person's—was due to arrive immediately, I would hardly need the caution of a policeman. Because the policeman was so insistent that I should wait, I did so; but the Prime Minister's car did not arrive for a good one minute. I had said to the policeman that Question Time was due to begin, but it made no impression on him. May I take it that the Prime Minister is given such special preferential treatment that hon. Members are supposed to wait at Carriage Gate until her car arrives in due course?

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the policeman was looking after the hon. Member's health to ensure that he arrived here safely before Question Time. I shall, of course, look into the matter.

Armed Forces Bill

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Further to the answers given by the Leader of the House to my hon. Friends the Members for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) and for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on the Armed Forces Bill, we have a problem because we shall not be able to draft amendments to the Bill in the light of the Select Committee's report until less than 24 hours before we debate the Bill. Will you accept amendments much later than normal?

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Member. I had already picked up that message in the earlier exchanges. I shall certainly do that.

BILL PRESENTED

EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (AMENDMENT)

Mrs. Lynda Chalker, supported by the Prime Minister, Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Hurd, Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Michael Jopling, Mr. Secretary Ridley, Mr. Secretary Baker, Mr. Kenneth Clarke, Mr. Secretary Channon and Mr. Attorney-General, presented a Bill to amend the European Communities Act 1972 so as to include in the definition of "the Treaties" and "the Community Treaties" certain provisions of the Single European Act signed at Luxembourg and The Hague on 17 and 28 February 1986 and extend certain provisions relating to the European Court to any court attached thereto; and to amend references to the Assembly of the European Communities and approve the Single European Act: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Tuesday 8 April and to be printed. [Bill 126.]

PETITIONS

Social Security

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): I seek leave to present a petition on behalf of 5,000 of my constituents. It explains that legislation based on the "Reform of Social Security — Progamme for Action" White Paper would be extremely detrimental to many of the poor, not only in Ayrshire but in the United Kingdom. The good and sensible people of Ayrshire have appended their names to the petition in the hope that the House will take note of the request that the Social Security Bill should not go forward to Third Reading.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): I seek leave to present a petition, with which I wish to be associated, on behalf of the elderly people of Dundee who are concerned at the review of the social security system outlined in the Fowler review paper. There are 150,000 elderly persons in Scotland who receive supplementary benefit and a further 75,000 who do not claim supplementary benefit. Rather than seek to review the supplementary benefit system to cut benefits, these elderly people in Dundee would be much better off if the Secretary of State for Social Security carried out a review to ensure that the 75,000 people entitled to claim supplementary benefit receive it and to ensure that benefits are increased. I am sure that hon. Members agree. On behalf of those people, I ask the Minister not to proceed with the review.

To lie upon the Table.

Police Complaints Authority

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Donald Thompson.]*

Mr. Speaker: I draw the attention of the House to the fact that this debate started five minutes later than I had hoped. The first debate will therefore have to end shortly after 11.30 am. I hope that we shall make up time later in the other debates.

11.6 am

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I preface my comments in this now shortened debate by saying that it is with considerable regret that I have to raise the issue of the police complaints procedure and specifically as it applies to the inquiry into the events surrounding the visit by the former Home Secretary to Manchester university at the beginning of March last year.

The Minister of State will be aware that in the past 12 months I and my colleagues have expressed our concern at those events. On 14 March 1985 my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) asked for an independent public inquiry into the actions of the police. The Minister responded by saying that he felt that the existing complaints procedure was perfectly satisfactory. Since then, the report of the independent inquiry set up by Manchester—the so-called Platts-Mills inquiry—has been published. The inquiry made serious allegations to which there has not been, to date, a proper answer from any of the authorities.

I am grateful for the fact that *The Guardian* has published over the past four days a series of articles which have brought the events up to date and given voice to further extremely serious allegations about events in the area policed by the Greater Manchester police.

The Opposition Front Bench endorses my attempts to seek answers to these serious allegations. I should like to get to the bottom of these allegations to ascertain whether we can restore the concept of justice in an area where many people would claim that it has not been forthcoming. We seek to offer protection to a number of the people who have been involved in these events in the past 12 months.

I do not want this debate to turn into a generalised police-bashing exercise. I am conscious of the fact that, if that happened, the Minister might be forced to take a defensive position. I do not want that. I do not intend to make generalised criticisms of the Greater Manchester police or of the chief constable, but I cannot shirk my responsibility to the area that I represent. Parliament cannot shirk its responsibility, and to that extent I have the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House. There are some serious matters that demand our attention.

I know the Minister well enough, after our contacts on different occasions, to know that he is extremely serious about wanting adequate policing of our cities. I know that he will take my comments seriously, and I say that with a degree of respect in advance of his reply to my speech. I do not think that the House wants anodyne answers, and I do not mean that unkindly. It would not be sufficient simply to refer us back to the existing police complaints procedure, because the allegations that have been made are now too serious simply to palm matters off for a further few months.

Individual policemen have been involved in events of an extremely sinister and serious nature. I am suggesting that the inquiry that has been established has been reluctant to take action on a number of matters, and some people interpret that as meaning that the inquiry is simply covering up the extremely serious behaviour of the individuals involved. I regret to say that I think that the inquiry to date has been incompetent in the prosecution of its task. In making that charge, I must tell the Minister that the whole of the complaints procedure is now also on trial.

This is the first inquiry under the new procedures, and is almost certainly one of the most important inquiries with which the procedures will have to deal for some considerable time. To an extent, I hope we can all accept that, whatever our different views on the matter, this is a matter of fundamental importance both to policing specifically and to the control that society exercises over that policing.

I do not want to dwell upon the events of 1 March last year, because, although they are still important, they have been out-distanced by subsequent events, and specifically they have been out-distanced by what has happened to at least two of the students involved. Over the past year they have suffered what *The Guardian* has described as a "systematic campaign of intimidation". They have been harassed and attacked. It can only be accepted that the harassment and attacks have been systematic and have led to the students living in a climate of fear. They have suffered appallingly over that period. It is our duty and that of the police to protect society and individuals against such fear. Manifestly, that has not happened in this case.

I should like to refer specifically to Sarah Hollis. I should not have referred to Sarah Hollis had her circumstances not been widely reported already in the press. She has suffered considerable anxiety, fear and brutal attacks over the past 12 months. She was publicly injured at the time of the former Home Secretary's visit to Manchester university and she made a formal complaint to her Member of Parliament at that time.

That was followed by what can only be described as the persecution of Sarah. Specifically, she was followed by marked police vehicles, and she claimed to have received anonymous telephone calls at different times of the day and night. While riding her bicycle, she was stopped by motorcycle policemen for alleged offences. Most important, her house was burgled in June. Various items were taken, including two witness statements about the former Home Secretary's visit and a number of her membership cards of various quasi-political organisations, for example, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

Subsequent to that burglary, Sarah visited the then head of the police team inquiring into this matter, Deputy Chief Constable Reddington, of the Somerset and Avon police force. The Platts-Mills inquiry stated on the basis of Sarah Hollis's evidence:

> "In the presence of Mr. Reddington, a witness statement was taken from her as to the events of 1 March, and the injuries from which she had suffered. This was done by Detective Inspector Edwards. On completion of the witness statement, Mr. Reddington indicated that he was aware that Sarah Hollis had other matters to raise. She mentioned the harassment and the burglary. Mr. Reddington began to shout at her, asking whether she was alleging that it was police officers who had done this. Not surprisingly she burst into tears and left the room."

Inspector Edwards later confided to her that this was necessary to establish whether she was telling the truth about the burglary.

That alleged behaviour by the head of the inquiry is not suitable or fitting for an independent inquiry, and is

[Mr. Tony Lloyd]

unacceptable by any standards. Sarah subsequently went into hiding, with the result that when she came out of hiding the harassment continued. Finally, in January of this year, she was attacked and punched, with led to her receiving a severely injured eye. She believes that the person who attacked her was the man who had previously threatened her, and she believes that that man is a policeman.

Following that, Sarah withdrew all co-operation from the various inquiries taking place. It might be possible to argue that as Sarah has twice now withdrawn her co-operation, she is an unreliable witness. I would suggest that it is far more plausible to argue that she is a very frightened young woman.

I should now like to consider the case of Mr. Steven Shaw, another of those involved in the former Home Secretary's visit to Manchester. Steven spoke at a meeting shortly after the former Home Secretary's visit which discussed non-co-operation with the police inquiry and advocated co-operation with an inquiry set up by the police monitoring unit of the city of Manchester. Subsequently, Steven's thesis was stolen. He informed his professor at the university and Mr. Steve Wright of the police monitoring unit of the theft. However, he did not inform the police. Several days later he was picked up for speeding and taken to Longsight police station, where he was greeted by the desk sergeant who said that he, Steven, was the chap making allegations about his thesis.

It is obviously very serious for me to suggest that the police somehow knew about the thesis, as Steven had not told them about it. Steven suffered a horrific beating at Bootle street police station and was hospitalised. He did not co-operate with Somerset and Avon inquiry until earlier this year. Shortly after co-operating with that inquiry, Steven received another severe beating, with the result that he again had to spend some time in hospital. He was badly injured and no doubt the hon. Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman), Mr. Shaw's Member of Parliament, will make some comments about that.

There have been allegations that the police used unmarked police cars, but the registration numbers of the cars clearly showed that they were registered with the police and were used for surveillance. There is a serious allegation that the burglary at Sarah Hollis's flat was, to some extent, organised by the police. Mr. Frank Logan, who was convicted of that burglary, alleges, and has sworn an affidavit to this effect, that the police put it into his mind that he should rob that flat. Mr. Logan also said that at no time did he or his accomplice take any papers from Sarah's flat. That is a clear implication that someone else also entered Sarah Hollis's flat at the same time to obtain the witness statements.

The Avon and Somerset inquiry, as I have said, has started off on the wrong foot and has generated no confidence whatsoever. There is a degree of scepticism among the students involved, which is vindicated to the extent that when Frank Logan was questioned by Inspector Edwards about the burglary at Sarah Hollis's flat he was asked whether students had put him up to the burglary. *The Guardian* made the point that when Steven Shaw was beaten, the Somerset and Avon police were asked to look into the matter, and a senior officer from Avon and Somerset police told a solicitor recently that he was getting nowhere because he could not find a motive for the attack on Steven Shaw.

Statements of events at and around the time of the Home Secretary's visit were handed over by the independent inquiry to the prosecution, but not to the defence. That is an extremely serious charge of lack of impartiality, and has itself resulted in a complaint to the independent inquiry.

To date there have been no charges, no convictions and no obvious sense of urgency in relation to the attacks on witnesses. I have already commented on the relationship of Deputy Chief Constable Reddington with Sarah Hollis. In July last year he told *The Guardian*:

"We have not received any complaints about policemen persecuting students."

As that was some months after he interviewed Sarah Hollis, that comment belies the true events.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Does my hon. Friend recall the wide disquiet in recent months about incidents in my constituency, including the assault on five youngsters by police officers in Holloway? Does he agree that that clearly shows the need for a fully independent system to investigate complaints about the police?

Mr. Lloyd: I heartily endorse that view. I understand that my hon. Friend's constituents were invited to meet the Home Secretary.

In a letter to *The Guardian* today, Sarah Hollis concludes:

"When I read the article on Monday I was extremely frightened for my own safety as a consequence of its publication."

Does the Minister agree that the same protection should be offered to Sarah Hollis and that he or his right hon. Friend the Home Secretary should agree to meet her?

I shall put a number of questions to the Minister formally at a later stage. Clearly the issues that have been raised are of the utmost importance. So far there have been no charges. We expect charges to be made, because the police do not have to wait until the independent inquiry is concluded. It is a matter of grave concern that the assaults on witnesses seem to have received inadequate attention from the police, who seem not to have pursued their inquiries with any diligence, leading not just to a certain cynicism among those involved, but to widespread concern that there is an attempt to cover up the truth. Parliament cannot allow such an attempt to succeed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): As we are behind schedule, I hope that hon. Members will be brief so that we can make up the lost time.

11.22 am

Mr. Sydney Chapman (Chipping Barnet): I am extremely grateful to the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd). It is typical of his courtesy and consideration that he informed me that he would be seeking to raise this matter today. I am grateful to him because one of the principal witnesses whom he mentioned is a constituent of mine.

I am second to no one in my admiration for the police forces of this country, who have to do a difficult, dangerous and occasionally dirty job, but that is not to assert that every officer necessarily acts with impeccable propriety on every occasion. There may be bad eggs in any

profession or occupation. It causes me deep concern and disquiet that my constituent, having been invited for interview at a police station in Manchester, where he was interviewed for five hours, was stripped and searched and, he claims, assaulted. I understand that no doctor was present. Certainly my constituent had to be taken to hospital, where internal rupture necessitated two operations.

Subsequently, my constituent was interviewed at his home in my constituency by the Avon and Somerset police for 17 hours, involving the preparation of a 58-page statement. He was advised to return to Manchester to check some statements with witnesses, and he did so. On the second day following his return he was attacked on the street outside the place where he was staying by, he claims, two people who assaulted him on the first occasion. His nose was broken, a cigarette end was burnt into his face, he was hit with a bottle, trodden on and punched, necessitating his being taken to hospital for treatment, after which he had to be brought by ambulance to his home in my constituency.

Four days later, the Avon and Somerset police spent a further 10 hours taking statements from my constituent. Since then he has received two death threats—one by telephone and one by letter. I implore my hon. Friend the Minister to ensure that the fullest inquiries are carried out into these complaints. I believe that it is as much in the interests of the police forces of our country as of anyone else that the truth of these matters should be discovered.

11.25 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) for raising this issue and to my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) for his contribution in respect of his constituent. As the House will recognise, the incident at Manchester university is the subject of a major inquiry currently under the auspices of the deputy chief constable of the South Wales police force and supervised by the Police Complaints Authority. I shall briefly put on record the chronology of events.

The incident took place on 1 March 1985. The first complaints were received by the chief constable of Greater Manchester in the early days of that month and the deputy chief constable of Avon and Somerset, Mr. Reddington, was appointed to investigate. He arrived in Manchester to start work on 11 March. As the House knows, the Police Complaints Authority was not established until 29 April, so the initial inquiry was under the previous arrangements. On 5 May a complaint which had only then been made to the Greater Manchester police was referred to the Police Complaints Authority to consider supervision of its investigation. The authority immediately decided to undertake supervision of that complaint and of all others stemming from events at the students union on 1 March.

I understand that 30 individual complaints were lodged formally with the Greater Manchester police about the conduct of police officers involved in the demonstration and that 68 general complaints have been made by members of the public. Statements from witnesses included references to a further 74 incidents which, in the view of the investigating officers, merit examination at the very least as criticisms of police conduct. In other words, 172 complaints or allegations are part of the inquiry for which the Police Complaints Authority is responsible.

So far, 540 civilian witnesses have made statements to the inquiry team. In addition, statements have been taken from 217 police officers and the team has not yet finished interviewing. That means a total of 757 witnesses. The whole inquiry has involved a team of 10 to 12 officers working full time since last March.

I wish to say categorically to the hon. Member for Stretford and to the House that there is no question of dilatoriness or attempted cover-up, but of total commitment to optimise the amount of investigation that must take place to try to reach conclusions on the basis of the broad range of complaints that have been registered. From September 1985, Mr. Reddington took up another post and was replaced as head of the inquiry by Mr. Vickers, deputy chief constable of South Wales.

The hon. Member for Stretford reasonably asks why no conclusion has yet been reached. The fault lies not with the officers or with the Police Complaints Authority, which is supervising the investigation very closely, but with the students who wished to make complaints about police conduct. As the hon. Member for Stretford said, after the incident Manchester city council decided to establish its own inquiry into the events of 1 March. That inquiry was set up under the chairmanship of Mr. Platts-Mills, QC. As I understand it, the students union in Manchester thereupon resolved that no student complainant about the events of 1 March should make a statement to the police investigation until the Platts-Mills inquiry had reported. In other cases, students involved in criminal proceedings declined—as they have every right to do—to give statements for the purpose of the inquiry until the criminal proceedings had been completed.

The result of all that was that, although the inquiry team was able to take statements from about 300 witnesses in the first six months of the investigation, none were from the most important complainants. In effect, the inquiry proceeded with one hand tied firmly behind its back at least until November last year. That was the major component in the significant delay, if delay it be, in the handling of the inquiry.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the serious incidents that have been the subject of allegations in *The Guardian* and have emerged from the inquiry—the alleged attacks on and harassment of Sarah Hollis and Steven Shaw, who is a constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet. Here again the inquiry team has been hampered in not being able to take timely statements from those two people.

In Mr. Shaw's case, the inquiry team was initially working on the basis of evidence published in the report of the Platts-Mills inquiry and in the media. As I understand it, Mr. Shaw's solicitor was reluctant to allow him to make any statement to the investigating officers until 22 January 1986. Miss Hollis has still made no statement about her allegations of harassment to the inquiry team, which is thus unable to take its investigation very far forward at present. In order to assist it as far as she is willing, Miss Hollis has indicated that she would allow the team to have access to the evidence that she gave to the Platts-Mills inquiry, to which I have referred. That evidence rests, as I understand it, with the Manchester city council. The head of the inquiry team has twice written to the council seeking access to, in particular, Miss Hollis's evidence, but also to any other evidence relevant to these inquiries.

[Mr. Giles Shaw]

In addition, the Police Complaints Authority itself has written to the council making the same request. No reply has been received to any of those letters. I must ask the hon. Member for Stretford — for whom I have considerable respect — whether he can facilitate the inquiry and help it to come to a speedier conclusion by encouraging Manchester city council to respond positively to the request made to it, rather than suggesting—as I think he did—that the inquiry is getting nowhere fast and that the reasons must rest fundamentally with the provision of essential evidence.

I have read the letter in *The Guardian* this morning, in which Miss Hollis gives her views. I have carefully studied recent articles in *The Guardian*. They contain serious allegations. The allegations will receive the thorough investigation that they so clearly deserve, but that is difficult to achieve in the absence of full assistance from the subjects of the alleged complaints and, in particular, from Miss Hollis.

I note from Miss Hollis's letter published this morning that she regrets the publication without either her knowledge or agreement of matters discussed in confidence with another person. If *The Guardian* has any new evidence at all on these matters—and some of what has been published appeared some months ago in the Platts-Mills report — it should pass it to the Police Complaints Authority or to the deputy chief constable of South Wales who is leading the investigation. I understand that *The Guardian* claims that some information has been sent to the authority. I am not sure what it is, and I understand that it has yet to arrive.

The position in this inquiry is far from easy. The inquiry is of the utmost importance and the broadest scope. We intend to ensure that the Police Complaints Authority, with the powers that Parliament has given it, should produce a thorough and full investigation into every aspect of the complaints. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Police Complaints Authority has already been involved in major incidents. There were the inquiries into the shooting of the Shorthouse boy in Birmingham, into the shooting of Mrs. Groce and into the death of Mrs. Jarrett. The authority handled those major complaints in a thoroughly effective and professional manner.

I give the hon. Gentleman the commitment that he wishes me to give. I will personally see to it that the Police Complaints Authority does its job with the effectiveness, thoroughness and probity that Parliament demands of it. However, the hon. Gentleman should understand how difficult that is to achieve in the absence of clear statements of evidence, clear support of the allegations and, above all else, the opportunity to question those most critically involved in the major allegations.

The Police Complaints Authority has been established for less than a year, and I am bound to record that its record under the chairmanship of Sir Cecil Clothier demonstrates its successful determination to serve the public with fairness and dispatch.

Helicopter and Aircraft Noise

11.36 am

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I am most grateful for the opportunity to raise the problem of aircraft and helicopter noise. This is of great concern to thousands of my constituents. No one who lacks the experience of living under the noise shadow of a major airport such as Heathrow should ever dream of belittling the impact on those who live nearby. In the hurly-burly of modern life, people long for peace and quiet in their own homes. Aircraft noise can ruin people's quiet enjoyment of their houses and gardens. That is especially true in summer when people are in their gardens or are more likely to open their windows. Aircraft noise interferes with the work of schools, offices, hospitals and, on Sundays, of churches. It can have an impact on private conversations, including telephone conversations, on people's private lives and on their enjoyment of music.

Some people do not mind aircraft noise very much, but to a major and significant proportion it is extremely annoying. Experiments carried out by the consultant psychiatrist at the West Middlesex hospital have proved that it can even lead to mental illness.

People can look to courts of law for protection against other forms of noise nuisance, but in the Civil Aviation Act 1949 Parliament expressly ruled out that protection in the case of aircraft and helicopter noise. That being so, people can do no other than look to the Government and Parliament for that protection against the nuisance of noise which in other cases is enshrined in English law so that people are entitled to expect the quiet enjoyment of their own houses. The Government therefore have a special duty to have regard to the impact of aircraft noise on householders.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): All that my hon. Friend says is absolutely right. People in my own constituency suffer from all the annoyances that he has described. Noise induces illnesses other than mental illness. Furthermore, because of the heavy use of Heathrow and the growing use of Northolt airport there is very heavy traffic on the roads. People cannot use the roads effectively and they suffer additional noise pollution from the roads.

Mr. Jessel: That is all true. My hon. Friend has been very active in connection with the environment in Ealing and the noise from aircraft and road traffic.

Unlike airline companies and airport authorities, householders who live under the flight paths cannot afford to employ expensive lobbyists or public relations firms. That, too, means that the Government have a duty to pay additional regard to the views of those hon. Members who represent people living under the flight paths. I hope that the Minister will confirm, on behalf of the Government, that he and the Secretary of State should always keep in the forefront of their minds a distinct and determined resolve to safeguard the interests of those who live below the flight paths and will confirm that those interests will always be upheld by the Government.

Over the years hon. Members with constituencies close to Heathrow have campaigned ceaselessly to curb the curse of aircraft noise. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) will catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is also my hon.

Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Mather) my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Hayhoe), my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground), my hon. Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins), and my hon. Friends the Members for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton), for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn), for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) and for Ealing, North. My late colleague Mr. Martin Stevens, as hon. Member for Fulham, was always assiduous in his efforts not only to contain aircraft noise but to mitigate the terrible road traffic effects along Cromwell road. Cromwell road, which passes through Fulham, is the main radial route between central London and Heathrow airport. It is greatly affected by the growth of traffic that has been generated by the airport.

We have all tried to contain airport traffic and the size of Heathrow, to make aircraft engines quieter and to cut night flights. Several of the hon. Members whom I mentioned are Ministers in other Departments or Whips who, by convention, do not speak on these matters on the Floor of the House. However, they have made their views known behind the scenes consistently and with great force. Together we have had some effect. Aircraft engines are slowly becoming quieter through the certification system and in the 1970s most of the night flights were banned —although the number has started to creep up again, which gives my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes great concern. I hope this will be stopped.

Last year the Government decided, against the advice of their inspector, to refuse planning permission for a fifth terminal at Heathrow. That courageous decision was widely applauded throughout west London and showed that the Government put peace, quiet and the health of the people above commercial interests. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary can confirm that the Government do not intend to waver on that position.

Next, I turn to the helicopter route between Heathrow and Gatwick. The noise of helicopters is unpleasant, whirring and penetrating, and many of my constituents find it thoroughly offensive and irritating. We would be willing to suppress our feelings if that helicopter route were somehow essential to the defence of the nation, or crucial to the fundamental wealth and prosperity of our country, but it is not.

Each year that route would be used by only 90,000 passengers of the 47 million who pass through the south-eastern airports of Heathrow, Gatwick, Luton and Stansted. That is one in 500, and is only about one in 40 even of the annual growth in the number of passengers through airports in the south-east. It is intolerable to suggest that the peace and quiet of tens of thousands of people living, working, enjoying their gardens and going about their daily lives below should be systematically interrupted to save 20 people 20 minutes each. That cannot be allowed. It must be stopped permanently.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): is my hon. Friend aware that that service generates about £24 million for the airlines concerned, and constitutes only 20 per cent. of the helicopter traffic that operates in the area? Does he agree that the prosperous south-east owes much of its prosperity to the existence of sophisticated air transport facilities? Is he aware that my constituents in the hard-pressed midlands are accepting a motorway in the national interest, and will take a dim view if this national asset were stopped?

Mr. Jessel: There are many motorways in the midlands and the north which do a great deal towards the prosperity of the midlands and the north, and which are an essential part of the infrastructure required to generate employment in the provinces, which all hon. Members wish to see. I do not believe that the helicopter route generates a profit of £24 million. Is that sum a profit or turnover?

Mr. Howarth: The £24 million is revenue — turnover.

Mr. Jessel: In that case the route does not make £24 million in profit, as substantial costs must be involved. The profit must be far less than £24 million. Indeed, I imagine that it is only £1 million or £2 million. It is wholly unreasonable every day to expect tens of thousands of people to endure that horrible noise to generate £1 million or £2 million of profit for an airline. Moreover, I cannot see that it is doing anything whatever for the people of the midlands. On the contrary, it is attracting more activity to the south-east.

The Government must take note of the strong feelings. People will be furious if the Secretary of State fails to hold to the extremely wise, sensible decision that he announced to the House in June 1984, that four months after the opening of the south-west section of the M25, which was to link Heathrow and Gatwick, these helicopter flights would be stopped.

This February my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State together with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State were kind enough to see a delegation led by my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne and including my hon. Friends the Members for Epsom and Ewell, for Esher, for Woking (Mr. Onslow), for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner) and me, on that matter so that we could put to them our deep concern on behalf of our constituents. My constituents in Hampton and the Hampton Hill area would be affected by the helicopter flight path.

The Secretary of State was acting in a quasi-judicial capacity, as there has recently been a public inquiry. However, it was conducted by a biased body because the Civil Aviation Authority exists for aviation and is unfitted to carry out an impartial inquiry. My right hon. Friend could only listen to us, could make no comment, and did not bat an eyelid, properly, apparently impervious to our onslaught. I am sure that he and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State must have taken note of the strong case that we put to them.

Our case was that the decision in June 1984 to stop helicopter flights four months after the opening of the relevant section of the M25 should be sustained, and that the flights should not be reintroduced. That section of the M25 was opened in October 1985 and the flights stopped in February 1986. That decision was right at the time. Nothing has happened since to change its rightness. It remains right today.

On 11 November 1985 I asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he had made of the long-term benefits of the M25 circular motorway round London. He replied:

"The M25 will provide a more convenient, quicker and safer route round London for through traffic. It will give easier access to ports and airports . . . and will relieve communities in

[Mr. Jessel]

London and the south-east of through traffic, noise and congestion."—[*Official Report*, 11 November 1985; Vol. 86, c. 297.]

Thus, the Secretary of State stated that part of the purpose of the M25 is to relieve people of noise. He did not say the noise of motor vehicles only, but noise. Noise includes aircraft and helicopter noise. Therefore, the huge public investment in the M25 will be partly wasted if it is not fully used to reduce the impact of noise, including helicopter noise, on my constituents and those of other hon. Members who live between Heathrow and Gatwick.

The distance between Heathrow and Gatwick is only 40 miles. Express buses operate at most times of the day and can make the journey in 40 minutes. Sometimes the M25 is crowded, but 98 per cent. of the buses complete the journey in less than 60 minutes. There are five buses an hour, that is one every 12 minutes, so the average waiting time is six minutes. Therefore, the average time of the journey, including waiting time, is just under one hour. A helicopter takes 20 minutes, the gap between them would be 40 minutes, so the average waiting time would be 20 minutes. Including the waiting time for the helicopter, passengers would take on average 40 to 45 minutes for the journey. The whole thing is nonsense. Passengers will save only 10 or 15 minutes. They could brag to their business colleagues or to their children that they had been in a helicopter, but the real benefit is quite negligible. There is no justification for the disturbance this would cause, and I hope the Secretary of State will give short shrift to the impertinent application to renew the service.

11.51 am

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) for allowing me a couple of minutes to make four or five brief points. It is typical of his dedication that, having attracted the good fortune of an Adjournment debate, he should choose a subject of great sensitivity, one that is perhaps of the highest importance for people living in the borough of Richmond upon Thames. Many of the problems that my hon. Friend mentioned are experienced by people throughout the borough and the House will know that there is no matter of greater concern to my constituents. Indeed, it was the subject of my maiden speech and has been the subject of four further speeches since then.

I will not repeat what my hon. Friend has said. I agree thoroughly with every word that he has uttered. This morning in my house in Barnes I was woken up by aircraft noise merely because last night was somewhat milder than many of the nights we have had of late. I forecast the misery that many of my constituents will suffer throughout the summer—to dare to open a window at night will mean lost sleep.

My five points are these. First of all, there is now serious bunching of night flights. The numbers of night flights is ever-increasing, there is a de facto reduction in the hours of restriction and when Concorde comes over early in the morning, people find it difficult to get back to sleep and are all the more conscious of those flights.

In his letter of 27 January my hon. Friend the Minister said:

"On the 5th of December last year after the arrival of Concorde at 4.14 in the morning there were 16 further landings before the end of the night restrictions period at 6.30 hours."

He went on to say:

"It is not at all unusual for a number of other aircraft to arrive at Heathrow between 4 a.m. and 6.30 hours. Indeed, between these hours 15 aeroplanes landed on the 3rd December, 12 on the 2nd December, 11 on the 6th December, and 15 on the 8th December."

That is the Minister's own admission of the fact that the restriction on night flights has failed. Secondly, the number of flights in all has increased. We know that the Government had a commitment to the 285,000 air traffic movements limit at Heathrow. They dropped that because the Liberals, Labour and certain Conservatives voted against the Bill in Parliament. However, the Government were committed to that ATM policy on environmental grounds. Once the Bill had been defeated, they ditched that policy because of political problems over Stansted. They had the policy to start with and for that reason they should continue with it. Air traffic movements have now increased close to 300,000 and the figure is getting near to the danger limit of 310,000.

Thirdly, what has happened to the use of alternate runways? I should like my hon. Friend to look at that. Fourthly, there is the problem of helicopters. My constituency is not particularly affected by the Heathrow-Gatwick link, but it would be greatly affected by any link between the City of London and Heathrow. That link would cross Barnes and Kew, and I warn my hon. Friend that if he puts forward any proposal for a helicopter link between the City of London and Heathrow, he will be opposed not only by the people of Richmond and Barnes and Twickenham but by people in all the constituencies west of the City.

My last point is that on the demise of the GLC the aircraft noise-line will go. I urge my hon. Friend to seek every possible way of getting the noise-line back. An example of its effectiveness is that between July 1984 and October 1985, 1,404 calls were made on that line. Most of them had to do with late night or early morning flights. In the battle against aircraft noise it is vital—if my hon. Friend wants to remove the emotion and what is sometimes looked upon as unreasonable belief — that there are accurate data about night flights. That noise-line produced accurate data, and perhaps more than any other service of the GLC my constituents will miss that facility—unless the scientific services branch is replaced elsewhere. I beg my hon. Friend to look at night flights. I have been to see him with representatives from HACAN, the Heathrow Association for the Control of Aircraft Noise to discuss these matters. I beg my hon. Friend to consider his views yet again.

11.54 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): First of all, I should like to direct the attention of my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) to section 76 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982. That section does not exclude all liability of aircraft operators for trespass and nuisance caused by aircraft in flight. The exemption applies only to aircraft flying at a reasonable height and complying with all the air navigation rules. Successive Governments have for many years taken the view that the problems posed by aircraft noise are in general best dealt with by taking and enforcing all practicable measures to ensure that the disturbance caused is minimised, bearing in mind the proper demands of the civil aviation industry.

A special point I should like to make in response to my hon. Friends the Members for Twickenham and for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) who spoke about the general responsibilities of the Government, is that I fully recognise that a Government as committed as we are to the success and expansion of aviation must, perhaps more than any other Government, be aware of and be prepared to respond to the anxieties in the public mind about aircraft noise. One of our priorities must be to tackle the problem at source, to determine which aircraft we shall allow to operate in the United Kingdom and for how long. As my hon. Friends will know, non-noise-certificated jet aeroplanes on the United Kingdom register were banned on 1 January, a full year ahead of most other European countries. We are committed to a similar ban on all such foreign registered aeroplanes from 1 January 1988.

Internationally, we are playing an important part in looking for a way to phase out the so-called chapter two jet aeroplanes, and I am pleased with the co-operation that we have received from the industry, even though it could have cost implications for some airlines. Noise standards generally will be reviewed from time to time and I shall take whatever steps are necessary, either domestically or internationally, to ensure that the controls are as stringent as possible, bearing in mind that they have to be technically feasible and economically reasonable.

Helicopters have long been a source of disturbance to some people and my hon. Friends talked about that. Helicopters have so far been able to operate without standards to govern them. International agreement is essential, and I am pleased to say that ICAO has now issued specific standards that we will adopt in the next few months. I am sure these will be environmentally beneficial and will be welcomed by my hon. Friends.

Regrettably, noise standards do not of themselves totally solve the problem. People, including those in my hon. Friends' constituencies, will continue to experience some discomfort from aircraft noise, even after we have done what we can through noise standards. Their burden can and must be eased by the implementation not only of noise standards but of operational measures such as quiet take-off and approach procedures.

At the airports designated under section 80 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982, Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted—the first of which applies to the constituencies of my hon. Friends—the Secretary of State and I have direct noise abatement responsibility. This responsibility will not be changed in any way by the privatisation of the British Airports Authority. It is essential that noise abatement measures are thoroughly reappraised from time to time. That is why the Government have embarked on important reviews about our responsibilities at designated airports. In answer to my hon. Friends, I can say that these reviews include noise monitoring, night restrictions, noise insulation and noise measurement.

All these reviews are progressing well. As my hon. Friends know, last month I embarked on a major, national consultation exercise to assist me in deciding, in the context of noise measurement, whether we should change from the NNI—the noise and number index—to LEQ as an index of aircraft noise at the designated airports. I am approaching this review with a completely open mind; my main concern, like I am sure that of my hon. Friends, is that we choose the right index and that we use the index which is most suitable and which commands public confidence. I have allowed six months for the consultation phase of the exercise and I look forward to considering all views before reaching any decisions.

Our noise index exercise is firmly based on research. The same is true of our other measures — night restrictions, for example. The last review, in 1981, of our night restrictions policy was based on the conclusions of a three-year study into the relationship between aircraft noise and sleep disturbance. A further study to validate or to assess changes since the original study has recently been completed and consultation with interested parties will of course play an important determinant of what we decide.

I am also engaged in a thorough review of the monitoring of noise and track keeping, in which both of my hon. Friends have taken a great interest. I want to be sure that the machinery for doing this is adequate and that we are able to retrieve the information in a form which enables us to ensure compliance by airlines with whatever rules we lay down.

Another important aspect of our approach to the problem of aircraft noise is the role of, and the scope for, consultation. I firmly believe that full consultation and public debate are essential components in the development of the right noise abatement measures — those which strike the right balance between conflicting interests. Poor consultation leads to hostility and confrontation. I can assure my hon. Friends that the present arrangement for consultation will remain unaltered by the privatisation of the BAA airports.

I turn now to the concerns expressed by my hon. Friends about the Heathrow-Gatwick helicopter link, which is known as the Airlink. Some measure of the different views upon this has been demonstrated by the interventions of my hon. Friends the Members for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) and Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth). In accordance with a direction given in 1984 by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and reaffirmed by a further direction last November, the present Airlink service terminated on 7 February. This was four months after the opening of the Wisley-Reigate stretch of the M25.

British Caledonian applied, in June 1985, to the Civil Aviation Authority to vary its licence so it could continue the Airlink service along new routes and at revised altitudes. My right hon. Friend directed the CAA that, if it decided to grant the application, the Airlink service should not fly along the new routes and altitudes until the matter had been referred to him and he had taken the final decision. The CAA announced on 4 February 1986 that it had granted British Caledonian's application and had referred the matter to the Secretary of State under section 17 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982.

My right hon. Friend and I have been considering the CAA's decision, together with all the evidence submitted to the hearing and the transcript of the proceedings——

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The Minister will be aware that British Caledonian Helicopters is based in my constituency. In his considerations, I hope that he will take account of the fact that Airlink is crucial to the profitability of British Caledonian Helicopters and that a refusal to continue with it would put at risk 170 jobs that are based in Aberdeen.

Mr. Spicer: That intervention will be noted.

Mr. Greenway: It is absolutely typical of Liberals to pay no attention to the problems of local people. We shall remember that in Ealing, North and Ealing generally. We know now that Liberals want the helicopter link. There is considerable resentment in the area over which the helicopter link would operate that no inquiry has been allowed, and I have asked the Ombudsman to consider this.

Mr. Spicer: These brief interventions are further signs of the great disparity of views that exist on this issue. We have received many representations, including many from hon. Members on both sides of the House, and we are considering all of these extremely carefully. I shall note the comments that have been made during the debate.

Clearly, this is a very important and sensitive issue. My right hon. Friend and I are well aware of the strength of feeling that has been expressed, both by those in favour of the Airlink as well as those opposed to it. It is right that we should weigh all the arguments very carefully before coming to our decision. My right hon. Friend hopes to make an announcement on this matter within a few weeks. It would therefore be inappropriate for me to comment any further at this stage other than to say that I have listened carefully to what has been said on both sides of the argument.

I hope that I have said enough to indicate the Government's deep awareness of the problems that are created by aircraft noise. We shall always be receptive to positive and realistic suggestions of measures which can achieve a significant improvement, whether they are made by my hon. Friends or by others. I am grateful, personally, to my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham for raising this matter as it has given me an opportunity to respond fully on behalf of the Government.

Greater London Council

12.5 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): In just under three hours' time, I shall be taking the chair at county hall for the last full meeting of the Greater London council. At midnight on 31 March the GLC will cease to exist and 97 years of continuous Londonwide government will be at an end. It will be a historic moment in the often turbulent history of London local government. I seek to draw the attention of the House to the events that are due to take place across the water in the full and confident expectation that the abolition of the GLC will prove to be merely a temporary aberration.

I remind the House that it was the Prime Minister who insisted on the GLC being abolished. The right hon. Lady did so because, in my opinion, she is wholly ignorant of local government. She is brimful of prejudice and utterly vindictive. The Prime Minister's image of the GLC between 1981 and 1983 was that created by Fleet street. The image was bizarre, extreme and without foundation. However, it successfully inflamed the Prime Minister's already well developed sense of bigotry. With her eyes on what she thought was party political gain, she wrote into the Tory party manifesto the commitment to abolish the GLC. We have that on the very best authority within the Conservative party.

Naturally, the Government attempted subsequently to dress up the Prime Minister's diktat with spurious claims about taking local government closer to the people. The truth of the matter came, however, from the lips of the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and chairman of the Tory party. On 14 March 1984, the right hon. Gentleman said:

> "The Labour Party is the party of division. In its present form, it represents a threat to the democratic values and institutions on which our Parliamentary system is based. The GLC is typical of this new, modern, divisive version of socialism. It must be defeated. So we shall abolish the GLC."

Such a statement should send a shiver down the spines of those who believe in justice and democracy. It reveals that the Conservative party is now in the hands of louts and that Britain's Government is being run by people who have nothing but contempt for democracy.

The abolition of the GLC has nothing to do with efficiency in local government. Of the 2,000 or so submissions received by the Government in response to their original proposals that were outlined in the White Paper entitled "Streamlining the Cities", not one from an independent or authoritative source was in support of GLC abolition. So embarrassed were Ministers by the overwhelmingly hostile reaction to their proposals that they refused to give details of the submissions or to lodge them in the Library. Indeed, the House was denied a debate on the White Paper. It soon became clear that the Prime Minister and her colleagues were not going to allow facts to get in the way of their prejudices. Repeated requests from Members for some assessment of costs or savings arising from abolition were met with blank refusals after initial estimates, clearly plucked from the air by confused and panicky Ministers, were quickly proved to be absurd.

I should like to place on record how delighted I am that the Government's estimate of 5,000 redundancies in London arising out of the abolition of the GLC has been

proved wrong. We now estimate that there will be a net increase in public sector jobs as a result of abolition, which merely demonstrates the efficient way that the GLC's current services are being staffed.

I have sat through hundreds of hours of debate in the House in various places on the abolition of the GLC, and, partial though I am—I am prepared to confess that—I can honestly say that I have never heard the Government win one of the arguments. Indeed, some of the worst maulings inflicted upon Ministers have come from senior Members on the Benches behind them.

Abolition of the GLC has undoubtedly done great damage to the electoral fortunes of the Conservative party in London, and naturally I welcome that. Indeed, the latest opinion polls published yesterday put Labour a clear 15 per cent. ahead of the Tories in London. However, far more importantly, abolition has done great damage to the image of Parliament. It has demonstrated that rational arguments, natural justice and public opinion are of no consequence whatever when faced by a brutal and arrogant Government with an overwhelming majority. As right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House have said on a number of occasions, abolition was a classic example of the elective dictatorship at work.

To have major changes in the structures of local government predicated on the political vindictiveness of the Prime Minister is bad enough, but then to have parliamentary sovereignty used to abolish an election and to destroy a whole area of local democracy is constitutionally outrageous.

The abolition of the GLC will leave London in a confused mess. Naturally, we shall muddle through—somehow we always do. But Parliament has been forced to expend enormous time and energy on a measure which is wholly irrelevant to the great problems facing the nation and our capital city. If only the Prime Minister hated London's unemployment and inner-city poverty as much as she hated county hall, perhaps London would not now be the city of despair that it has become to so many of our citizens.

After 31 March, London's local government will present a confused and haphazard pattern, botched together to try to make sense of abolition. Ministers said that abolition would streamline local government and remove unnecessary services, but an examination will quickly show that virtually all the council's present powers and services will remain. But instead of them being administered by one democratically elected and accountable body, they are being passed on to no fewer than 69 successor bodies—boroughs, joint boards, quangos and Government Departments.

I shall specify one quango, the London Residuary Body, truly the quango of all quangos, set up by a Government who once said that their policy was to abolish them. The LRB has a true-blue Tory as its chairman on a cool £50,000 a year salary. Appointed board members are paid the equivalent of £6,000 a year for one day's work a week—very nice work if you can get it. But, of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you cannot, unless you are a personal friend of a Secretary of State or a loyal supporter of the Tory party, and I accuse you of neither of those faults.

I remind hon. Members that Ken Livingstone, who was democratically elected, received the princely sum of £7,000 a year in allowances and expenses to run far more services than the LRB is receiving. However, in its recent budget the LRB announced a budget of something just short of two thirds of the GLC's budget. It is supposed to wind itself up in five years, but with all the additional tasks that it has now been given there is no chance of that happening. Indeed, litigation is still outstanding from the 1964 reorganisation of London's local government, so with 10,000 GLC properties to dispose of, what chance has the LRB got of tidying all that up in five years? However, that is an academic argument because, after the Labour party wins the next general election, the LRB will be sent packing.

While I am sending messages to the LRB, let me remind it that should county hall be sold as a hotel or supermarket—I unveiled our latest GLC blue plaque outside county hall only an hour or so ago—the next Labour Government will take it back for London. That is a firm commitment given by the shadow spokesman for the Environment.

London, of course, will survive the abolition of the GLC: we all know that. But many services will be less efficiently run, and many groups of people and organisations will be badly hit when the GLC goes. I shall highlight just a few.

The arts in London will suffer greatly, right the way through from the great centres to the smallest of the touring companies, because the GLC has been a magnificent funder of the arts. We estimate that the shortfall in arts funding in London will run to about £10 million next year. At the moment, the Law Lords are deliberating on further legal points about the GLC's forward funding. If we lose that case, the arts in London will lose another £4·6 million because that has been built into the forward package; and that does not include the black arts centre at the Roundhouse.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the tax concessions in the Budget for charitable bodies, including arts bodies, and the new proposal by which each person can deduct £100 a year from his salary and receive tax relief in order to benefit charities in the arts will give tremendous benefits to the arts, including those in the Greater London area?

Mr. Banks: Of course I know of the proposals. We had a debate not long ago on business sponsorship of the arts when we raised the matter of tax concessions. I welcome them. Who would not? Anyone who is interested in the arts would welcome them. But the hon. Gentleman is deceiving himself if he thinks that that will in any way substitute for the loss of funding that the arts in London and throughout the metropolitan area will suffer as a result of the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan counties. It will not do, but time will tell, and we can come back to that later.

The immediate areas in London which will suffer will be the ethnic and community arts where the GLC has funded art forms and groups that have long been ignored. Those are the areas for which it is most difficult to get business sponsorship and private donations.

With Easter weekend upon us, it is well worth remembering all the GLC-funded festivals in our parks—the Easter parade, Thamesday, South Bank weekend, the May Day festivals, the London horse show and children's days. All those now have question marks against their future. Parks that were being developed, such as Burgess and Mile End, can never now be completed

[Mr. Banks]

without a Londonwide body. The future running of the Royal Festival hall gives me great concern, with 160 of our present staff there facing unemployment. The open foyer policy has been widely acclaimed, but how long will the Arts Council retain it in view of the fact that the South Bank board has already decided that it will change the GLC's South Bank literature centre—Bookspace—back into a restaurant? That does not seem like the South Bank board approaching in a serious way the problem of making the arts more accessible.

I shall be monitoring developments closely on the South Bank, and, again, I look forward to the return of the Royal Festival hall to a democratically elected council for London — a repossession already promised by the shadow spokesman for the arts.

Speaking, for a moment, as chairman of the GLC, I wish to record my personal satisfaction with the enormous progress made by the council in advancing the interests of London's women. The same is true in respect of our policies to combat racism and the discrimination still suffered by those Londoners with disabilities, by gays, lesbians and the elderly. It is right that the GLC should have funded groups concerned with the welfare of gays and lesbians, but so vile and reactionary are the majority of Fleet street journalists that the average Londoner could perhaps be forgiven for thinking that that was all that the GLC ever did.

The whole miserable saga may have concerned about 50 so-called controversial groups, but there were literally hundreds of other voluntary organisations over which there has never been any disagreement. The GLC's budget for the voluntary sector rose from £1 million in 1981 to £82 million in this, our final year. It is in this crucial area of caring and of social welfare for Londoners that the greatest damage could be done after abolition.

The Government's proposals for substitute funding are puny and wholly inadequate. Yet even at this stage the GLC is trying to stave off disaster in the voluntary sector. Today we have paid into court more than £30 million for funding the voluntary sector, should we win the case in the other place. If we lose, the money will go to the London Residuary Body for distribution to the London boroughs. Of course, the LRB will say that the abolition of the GLC is producing results and saving money. But the money currently being distributed to the boroughs comes from selling off assets and dismantling the balances accumulated. Once that money has gone, there will be no more, and then the real cost of abolition will become apparent.

The cost in terms of service efficiency will become apparent far more quickly than that. For example, in its waste disposal and recycling services, the GLC led the world in terms of efficiency and technology. The new proposals for London, whereby the GLC's unitary scheme is broken up into a series of groupings and authorities, has dumbfounded all those involved in waste disposal. The desirability of retaining a Londonwide waste disposal authority was self-evident, but so set were the Government against admitting the need for any strategic functions that they rejected it out of hand. What a bunch of petty and unimaginative little people now run this Government. The boroughs are already disagreeing among themselves over waste disposal, and the costs of waste disposal in London are set to soar through increased staffing and the loss of economies of scale. It is a pathetic shambles, and Ministers know it to be so.

I shall now deal with transport, because we can already see the impact of abolition as London Transport was taken away from the democratic control of the GLC and handed over to yet another quango in 1984. Since then, bus services have been reduced, fares have been dramatically increased, and many jobs have been lost. The GLC's dial-a-ride, taxicard and concessionary fares are superb facilities, the future of which cannot now be totally guaranteed as boroughs and the London Regional Transport increase charges or simply run down the services provided.

I have no doubt, for example, that the GLC's lorry ban will be terminated by the Secretary of State for Transport at the earliest opportunity. The fragmentation of bus lanes, cycle lanes and traffic schemes will effectively mean the end of most of those environmentally desirable innovations.

I have merely detailed a few of the areas where abolition of the GLC will have a marked effect on London. There are many more, such as planning, housing, industry, employment, scientific and technical services, and computer and information technology. Valuable services and expertise that have been built up over many years will be lost. All this is being done not because of any assessment of the needs of London and its citizens but because of petty party political spite on the part of the Prime Minister and her Government.

An opinion poll published yesterday shows that 81 per cent. of Londoners think that it is important to have a single body in the capital city for providing and co-ordinating services, and that no less than 94 per cent. of them believe that it is important for such a single body to be democratically elected. When I lower the GLC flag at county hall at midnight on 31 March, London will become the only capital city in Europe to be without a citywide government. Such a situation cannot continue for very long.

Apparently, even most Tories in London believe that a strategic authority for London will be re-established, and the Labour leadership has already committed itself to creating such an authority soon after the next general election. What we are about to witness is a mere break of service in London government for a year or so. For my part, I will continue to keep the name of the GLC before the House in every way open to me. I can assure the House that I have boundless energy and total commitment for such a campaign. Immediately after the Easter recess, I shall seek leave to introduce a Bill to establish a Londonwide authority, based on the conclusions of the GLC's research and consultation project. I have that document with me, and copies are being sent to all London Members of Parliament.

The GLC's abolition will haunt this Government through the coming Fulham by-election, the London borough council elections and right through to the general election. I still maintain that abolition will prove to be the single biggest error of political judgment on the part of this Government, and I for one will take every opportunity to help rub their faces in it. I will never forgive or forget those who, for reasons of spite or political preferment, have caused so much misery to loyal GLC employees and have

created so much confusion and uncertainty for London's local government. But time will allow us to settle all these scores, and revenge will be very sweet indeed.

12.25 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey) *rose——*

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the Minister responsible for sport to reply to this debate when the Secretary of State for the Environment clearly has responsibility for this monstrous act of abolition of the GLC?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): That is not a matter for me.

Mr. Tracey: I am glad to hear that after more than 200 hours of debate on the subject of the GLC's abolition, and with the benefit of answers from my colleagues to innumerable parliamentary questions, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), the chairman of the GLC, has at last changed his tune. A year ago, he and his colleagues claimed that abolition simply could not be put into effect by 1 April 1986. In the Standing Committee debate on 18 December 1984, he even went so far as to say:

"Our point is that it is impossible to achieve such an objective by that date".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 18 December 1984; c. 13.]

With a mere 100 hours to go, I think that I can safely predict that the hon. Gentleman will be proved conclusively wrong.

Of course, total conversion would be too much to hope for. Although the hon. Gentleman no longer claims that abolition cannot be achieved, he is still prophesying chaos and disaster, as is his custom. He simply cannot believe that the excellent London borough councils are capable of taking on their new responsibilities without the GLC to tell them where they are going wrong. Let me remind the House that those authorities — the London borough councils and the Common Council — are already the major providers of services in London. As we said in the White Paper entitled "Streamlining the Cities", the case for change rests on the fact that

"in the metropolitan areas, the boroughs and district councils are the primary local government units. They are responsible for the majority of local spending. They are big enough to have full responsibility for most local services; at the same time they meet the need for an authority to be accessible to the local community".

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Minister give way on that point?

Mr. Tracey: These facts have not changed. Despite all the GLC's expensive publicity—and my goodness it has been expensive—the GLC has had full responsibility for only a very limited range of services. Indeed, the only change since the White Paper has been the establishment of London Regional Transport, which has further reduced the GLC's areas of responsibility. Of course, that has not stopped it spending ratepayers' money, searching for a role, or continuing the conflict and uncertainty which abolition is designed to eliminate by removing this unnecessary tier of local government.

It is not only the conflict and uncertainty to which we can now wave goodbye. We expect the removal of the unnecessary tier both to improve the structure of local government and to lead to savings in manpower and expenditure. The size of the savings will, of course, depend on the decisions of the successors to the GLC and the metropolitan county councils. Eighteen months ago we estimated that administrative savings could, after transitional costs, amount to £100 million a year or some 7,000 posts in London and the metropolitan county councils together. Indeed, there are already signs that they could be of the right order. The allowances for redundancy payments which the residuary bodies are making in their budgets total close to 7,000, and I understand that NALGO has a similar estimate.

Yesterday, *The London Standard* blazoned the headline "Job cuts fiasco", but that was belied by the article beneath it. Depending on which bit of it one wants to believe, there will be 2,300 redundancies in London, or 2,775.

It is of course important not to confuse initial redundancy figures with posts saved. Staff have been leaving the GLC and metropolitan county councils for jobs elsewhere, and some jobs in the residuary bodies will disappear later in the year. Further, we always expected that the numbers made compulsorily redundant would be much smaller. I am glad to say that this seems likely to be the case. But savings in actual posts of £100 million annually recurring is not exactly chicken feed, even by Labour county hall standards.

Moreover, ratepayers are already seeing the benefit of the changes to come. In London there are widespread and significant reductions in rates and a number of borough councils have acknowledged that the abolition of the GLC is one of the factors that has made the reductions possible.

It would of course, be surprising if the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, in his partisan way, had anything good to say about the prospect of reduced burdens falling on both commercial and domestic ratepayers. He does not believe that the borough councils can be more efficient than the GLC. I must, however, emphasise that the figures that I have quoted are for administrative savings alone. We have always said that policy savings resulting from decisions taken by authorities closer to the communities that they serve will be in addition to the savings from rationalisation alone, even though it is still too soon to estimate what these will be.

We have also made it clear that references to policy savings should not be taken to imply wholesale cuts in services. There has been scaremongering talk, for example, of reductions in the fire brigade. But my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has made it absolutely clear that no fire stations can be closed or fire appliances withdrawn without his express approval. He simply would not give that consent if it meant that the level of fire cover would fall below the nationally recommended standard.

There is absolutely no reason why the transfer of functions should mean any decline in service standards, nor need it lead to the abandonment of useful London-wide facilities. The London boroughs have, for example, carefully considered the future of a number of these and have decided to set up a scheme for Londonwide research and intelligence under section 88 of the 1985 Act. They have also decided arrangements to continue the work of the scientific branch, to set up a voluntary scheme for concessionary fares and to continue the taxicard scheme.

Hardly surprisingly, the majority did not see a need to continue the GLC's women's equality unit in its present form or the GLC's police committee support unit—an iniquitous organisation—but then the GLC has never

[Mr. Tracey]

had any responsibility for the police and we always expected the successor authorities to look critically at the services which they inherit to ensure efficiency and economy in the interest of all Londoners. They have shown that they are perfectly capable of taking decisions in the interests of London as a whole.

In addition to the facilities that I have already mentioned, the boroughs' co-ordinating committee has agreed to set up a scheme under section 48 for collective grants to voluntary bodies serving wider areas. This scheme, based on Richmond, has a budget of £27 million for 1986-87.

Throughout the debates on abolition, much play has been made of its consequences for the voluntary sector in London in particular. We said from the outset that it was not our intention to damage worthwhile voluntary projects through abolition; and we have provided a package of measures to support that intention.

Apart from providing in the Act for the section 48 scheme, for collective funding, we have ensured through the rate support grant settlement that the boroughs have access to all the resources that would have been available to the GLC and have been able to take account of the geographical distribution of £35 million of GLC grants to local voluntary bodies. We have also added to the successors' resources. We have offered transitional grant of £40 million over four years on projects previously supported by the GLC and MCCs. The amount of grant allocated to the boroughs for 1986-87 is over £12 million. I therefore believe that the Government have honourably fulfilled the assurances which we gave the voluntary sector during the abolition debate.

I do not, of course, claim that there are not some voluntary bodies still uncertain about their future — although the boroughs' decision to provide temporary funding through the Richmond scheme will have provided a welcome relief to many. Nor am I claiming that all GLC-funded groups will receive the same or even any support from the successor authorities. But that is a decision for them. While we have given the successors the resources the GLC and MCCs would have had—and more—we are not in the business of dictating their priorities, nor indeed the speed at which they reach their decisions.

As we said from the outset, abolition is all about local decisions being arrived at locally and democratically and I think that the London boroughs have shown through their Richmond scheme that they are well able to rise to the challenge. Despite the hon. Member's predictions of chaos and widespread disaster, I think that the worries about successor authorities failing to provide substantial funding can now be discarded and that once the dust has settled we will see the voluntary sector continuing to flourish.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the arts. I can predict a much less gloomy future than has been claimed. Once again, we have stuck to our undertaking to provide the resources that the GLC and MCCs would have had, and we have gone further in providing £43 million in additional central funding, including £25 million to the Arts Council for the performing arts. Here, too, the successor authorities are showing that they are well up to the task. Westminster city council has, for example, offered grants approaching £3 million, including £2·2 million to the English National Opera and the London Festival Ballet, while the Arts Council has established the South Bank board to run the whole arts complex. I am fully confident that the South Bank will flourish under its management.

Opposition Members may claim that the new South Bank board is only one of a whole host of new bodies that we have had to establish to take on the GLC's responsibilities, but even that claim does not stand up to close examination. The Arts Council is hardly a new organisation, nor is the Thames water authority which will be taking over land drainage and flood protection which are already water authority functions outside London. The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission and the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, which will also be taking on new responsibilities, were not born out of the Local Government Act 1985. What we have are the new ILEA, the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority and the London waste regulation and disposal authorities —hardly a host, even counting the London residuary body, which is of course a purely temporary organisation needed to wind up the affairs of the GLC.

I do not say that winding up the GLC and the MCCs will be easy. It will be more difficult perhaps than it should have been because of the obstructive behaviour which persisted far too long and was encouraged by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West. I am sure that he will be devoting his considerable energies to publicising any and every little thing that he believes does not go smoothly. But the problems will be transitional and will be resolved. What remains will be a streamlined structure with the borough councils taking their proper place in London's local government. They will show that they do not need the GLC, and their ratepayers will reap the benefits.

In a very short time people will be asking what all the fuss was about. Indeed, even now, after all their initial fervour, all that the Opposition can manage in the final week of Parliament is a half-hour Adjournment debate initiated by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West. That just shows that the GLC is going out, not with a bang, but with a whine and a whinge and a contribution from the most political chairman of the GLC that we have ever seen.

Warrington (Refuse Tip)

12.38 pm

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South): I am grateful for the opportunity of this Adjournment debate. I must correct an error which is entirely my fault. The request for the Adjournment debate refers to the decision not to call in the planning application for a refuse tip on land at Moore in Cheshire. I am reminded that although for some reason all the parties, including the borough council, refer to the land at Moore, the land is not at Moore but at Arpley meadows, the whole of which is in the Warrington district. No part of it is in the parish of Moore.

I realise that it may be said that I am trying to bolt the stable door after the horse has fled. On Monday 17 March the Secretary of State took the decision not to call in the application by the Manchester Ship Canal Company to have a waste disposal tip on the land at Arpley meadow but to leave the decision to the county council.

Within hours of the Secretary of State making that decision the Cheshire county council planning committee, ironically with one of the Labour councillors for Warringon in the chair, approved the plan for such a tip with indecent haste. Therefore, the decision for Cheshire had been taken. I understand from the borough council that it is considering the possibility of a judicial review of the decision taken by Cheshire county council, presumably based on the speed with which the decision was taken. That speed did not enable the council to consider objections to the scheme and I understand that Warrington borough council was not given the opportunity to comment on the amended plan which was approved on 18 March.

I protest over the fact that the Ministry did not call in the planning application. There is one simple question. Why was the planning application not called in by the Ministry? Of course I accept that we must have waste disposal tips somewhere. However, if we were more efficient in the recycling of waste we would save a great deal of natural resources and have less need for large tips. In this day and age alternative methods of waste disposal should be considered when any form of public inquiry is held.

However, we must have some form of tips. I recognise that the county council is under a statutory duty to provide for waste disposal. I also recognise that, wherever a tip is located, it is likely to be unpopular and there are likely to be objections. I accept that, if an application is called in after a public inquiry, it may well be that, at the end of the day, the same decision will be taken. My objection is that by leaving that decision to Cheshire county council the objectors' case has not been heard.

It cannot be said that this was not a controversial application. It was opposed by many local people and it was opposed by all the parish councils in my constituency —Penketh, Lymm and Moore. The hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) and myself are also aware that it was opposed by Warrington borough council. All these parties asked the Minister to call the application in for consideration.

This is not a minor matter. The plan has been considerably modified. The original proposal was that the tip should be used for 40 years, but that has been modified to 25 years. That is still a generation—a generation for many people of lorries going in and out of the site. The site is roughly 400 acres. The height of the tip above ground level has been modified but it is still believed that it will reach 130 ft above the ground. The site will have 550,000 tons of rubbish dumped there every year. It is clear that it will be the major tip for Cheshire and it will also provide space for the waste from Merseyside.

This is not a normal type of planning application. Although it is true that the owner of the land is the Manchester Ship Canal and although it is true that the company made the application, the interested party in granting that application is the county council which is proposing to use the tip. It seems inevitable that it was bound to grant an application, if given the opportunity to decide it, because it is the party interested in achieving that result.

The speed with which the decision was taken certainly tends to confirm the fact that the decision had been prejudged. I repeat that, as far as I am aware, neither the district council nor the parish councils were officially asked to comment on the modified proposals. The failure of the Minister to call the application in has meant that the objectors have not been heard. The impression that is given is that Cheshire county council has been the judge and jury. I remind the Minister of the old adage that justice must not only be done but be seen to be done.

Why was the application not called in? I have no doubt that the Minister will say that the Secretary of State was sympathetic to the proposal but that it did not meet the criteria which are used for decisions of this kind. I realise there is great pressure on the Ministry to call in many inquiries and that it cannot call them all in. I realise that one must have some criteria and that one must use power to call in sparingly. What are the criteria that are used? Are they statutory or discretionary? If they are discretionary, why was discretion not exercised on this occasion? If the Secretary of State felt he could not call the application in because it did not meet the criteria surely the criteria are wrong and should be changed.

I am aware that any planning inquiry is time-consuming and expensive. It has one great advantage—it allows people to be heard. I have no doubt that the parish councils, together with the development corporation, the borough council and those concerned with conservation, were anxious to be heard on this occasion. One does not know what the outcome or modifications would have been had there been such an inquiry.

Where there is a major application of a nature that will affect the lives of many people for many years, and where the planning authority is the applicant, the Ministry should call the application in. If the criteria do not allow the Ministry to do that, I submit that the criteria ought to be changed.

I protest that this decision has been made. It is a mistaken decision and it is unfair to those involved. In my area it has been described as dictatorial and undemocratic. I have promised the hon. Member for Warrington, North that I would give him an opportunity to contribute to this debate so I shall make one final point.

It is said that the land has ecological importance and that much of the wildlife habitat would be destroyed by the tip. The traffic on all the routes will be enormous but I have no doubt that the county will do their best to meet that increase in traffic. It will require a new bridge to be built over the Mersey. Will the building of that bridge require further permission or, if it is on private land, will the county council be able to build it? I understand that the outer Warrington local plan had recommended that the

[Mr. Mark Carlisle]

area should be protected for recreational use. There was the possibility of a county park. The hon. Member for Warrington, North and myself are aware that there is not much spare land in that part of Cheshire. I am concerned, not so much with the merits of the case, but the failure to give those who wish to object the opportunity to advance their objections. I bitterly regret the Department's decision not to call in the application.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. We got off to a late start this morning, but we have made good progress in catching up with the printed schedule. I should be grateful if hon. Members would help me get back on course at about 1 o'clock.

Mr. Mark Carlisle: I spoke for just 11 minutes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful.

12.51 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): I shall try to assist you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in getting back to our schedule.

I thank the right hon. and learned Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) for giving me this brief opportunity to support his objections. The matter affects not just his constituency but mine. Much traffic would be caused by 314 loads a day going through a heavily populated part of my constituency on Liverpool road to the new bridge that will be built at Forest Way, which the right hon. and learned Gentleman described.

The land has ecological, recreational and educational value. There should have been a public inquiry. Despite the modification from 40 years, 25 years is still a long time. It is still a high tip in low-lying land. It will be seen for a long way, certainly from the heavily populated area in my constituency of Warrington, North, and from the main railway line that runs from London to Scotland. These days the impression that people get as they pass through an area is important. Warrington is a delightful area, with many places of scenic beauty, but if there is such an eyesore that can be seen from the railway line, people might decide not to bring their industry and so on to Warrington. Therefore, the proposal is a mistake.

I do not understand why the Secretary of State did not use his discretion under section 35 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 and the articles of the General Development Order 1977. Under those provisions, he could have called for a public inquiry. The reason is that Cheshire county council has an interest—it will manage the waste disposal tip, which will be very large. The council will profit from it as the waste will come not only from the Warrington and Cheshire area but from Merseyside. As other tips come to the end of their lives, the amount of waste will be added to. As the right hon. and learned Member for Warrington, South said, that is a wasteful way of going about it. Other methods could have been used. The right hon. and learned Gentleman was right to say that Cheshire county council is judge and jury. It acted speedily, within 24 hours, so that no one had a chance to make an objection.

All the parties on Warrington borough council were unanimous in their opposition to the proposal. Environmentalists and anglers object. I have much correspondence from my constituents and others objecting to it. I cannot understand why the Secretary of State took that action. Many people think that it was a spineless, diabolical thing to do to inflict that on the people of Warrington. My constituents and people in the surrounding area are dismayed, disappointed and disgusted at the action of not only the Secretary of State but Cheshire county council. I want to convey their views and dismay in the strongest terms.

12.53 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) has raised an interesting and important matter. Quite rightly, he has been supported by the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) from the Labour Benches. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I know that the matter about which they are concerned is controversial. Indeed, proposals for development often are. That is one reason why in this country we have a planning system of which we are justly proud, which allows the majority of planning decisions on development proposals to be made by locally elected representatives. They are generally in the best position to understand the needs of their area and to have regard to the views of their electorate. I do not need to remind you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that often in debates in the House there is much talk about over-centralisation.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South has taken a close interest in the proposal by Manchester Ship Canal Company to tip domestic and industrial waste on 390 acres of land between the ship canal and the river Mersey at Moore, near Warrington. I appreciate his concern. Tips are, by their nature, particularly controversial. I know that my right hon. and learned Friend has lent his support to those of his constituents who approached him to express their opposition to the scheme.

I fully understand that local people are concerned about the impact of the proposal. Lymm parish council and Great Sankey parish council wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State expressing concern and drawing attention to the strong objection of local bodies. He received from my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South the representations of the Warrington New Town Nature Conservation Group. It expressed concern about the loss of areas of county ecological significance and the loss of an area used for informal recreation. The representations from Warrington borough council were brought to my right hon. Friend's attention by the hon. Member for Warrington, North. The borough was concerned, too, about the involvement of Cheshire county council as planning authority and waste disposal authority.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was aware of the other objections from local bodies and local residents. Some of the local interests that originally expressed concern about the proposal did not object, and I understand that some withdrew their objections. That resulted at least in part from amendments to the proposal, which were negotiated by Cheshire county council with the ship canal company. They clearly went some way to meeting some of the objections of local people.

Let me rehearse briefly the details as I understand them. The site is intended to replace an existing disposal area at

Gateworth farm on the opposite bank of the River Mersey. Capacity there will be exhausted in 1988. The new site is mainly dredging deposit ground, now disused. Cheshire county council, is to lease and manage the tip and will be the major user of the tip. The life of the tip was originally proposed to be 40 years, but in negotiation with Cheshire county council, as my right hon. and learned Friend said, the ship canal company reduced that to 25 years. Other amendments included reducing the visual impact of the tip by lowering its height by 14 m and by proposing shallower gradients. When complete, the southern section of the tip is to return to agriculture and the northern area to forestry.

I understand that a large measure of agreement has been reached with the Cheshire Conservation Trust. The trust is to lease and manage 180 acres of land adjoining the proposed waste disposal site as a nature reserve.

In its revised application, the ship canal company proposed to open up a footpath along the southern bank of the River Mersey and to provide an increased area devoted to forestry and landscaping. So, in the longer term, a substantial area of former waste land will become widely available for informal outdoor recreation. Wearing another of my hats, I welcome that.

But to pass on to the proposition that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had before him, it was not a question of the merits of the proposal—the issue was whether it was appropriate to take the decision out of the hands of Cheshire county council. My right hon. and learned Friend asked about that. The Secretary of State considered the proposal against his general policy, which is to continue to be very selective about calling in cases for his own decision. There is a long-standing policy that applications will in general be called in only if planning issues of wider than local importance are involved.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, after very careful consideration of all the representations that he received, decided that the application should be left to the county council to determine. He appreciated the strength of the views raised in opposition to the proposal and acknowledged their importance, but he concluded that they were of local rather than regional or national significance, and he was not persuaded that it was a matter that the county council did not have the competence to determine.

I am informed that the application was approved by the county council on 18 March. That is subject to negotiation of an agreement, under section 52 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, with the canal company for the 180 acres of woodland and wet grassland immediately to the south of the application site to be leased and managed by the Cheshire Conservation Trust.

I must emphasise that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State considered whether he should take the decision out of the hands of the county council. He was not taking a view on the merits of the proposal. But I would like, nonetheless, to invite the House to look beyond this particular case and consider the need for a positive approach to the whole Mersey basin. Right hon. and hon. Members will have heard of the Mersey basin campaign—a major Government initiative to clean the undoubtedly badly polluted water courses of the Mersey system and to promote matching improvements in the use of the land alongside. The basin covers 1,000 square miles. It takes in river and watercourses from the Pennine foothills to the mouth of the Mersey. The aim is to bring together public, private and voluntary sectors to attack the twin problems of water pollution and riverside dereliction. I hope that the energy and skill of local people and groups will be directed in a positive way to using every asset to bring this about.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's top priority is care for the environment. I do not think that anyone can doubt that from the statements he has made. The Mersey basin campaign is a prime example of that commitment. Ultimately, if everybody with an interest in the area pulls together, the result will make a contribution to the economy of the area and to creating an attractive environment and recreational facilities for the good people of the north-west.

Liverpool

1.1 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): In following the speech of the right hon. and learned Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) I am glad to say that I shall be saying a word or two at the end of my remarks about the problems of the River Mersey and one way of perhaps tackling unemployment in our area. I suggest that the construction of the Mersey barrage would help to assist jobless people in Merseyside and also be part of a campaign to clean up the Mersey and turn it into a resource for the people of our conurbation.

I want to use the opportunity of today's Adjournment debate to focus the attention of the House on the effect of the Goverment's economic policies, specifically on the city of Liverpool. Obviously, I shall talk about what the city can do for itself, but my primary purpose is to paint a picture for the House, and I intend to divide my remarks into four parts.

First, I shall outline the general effects of the Government's economic policy and will contend that it totally fails to address itself to the deep-seated problems of cities such as mine. Secondly, I shall fill in the detail on the canvas, placing before the House figures which demonstrate how Government policies have specifically affected Liverpool. Thirdly, I want to say something about the immediate implications of the policies. Finally, I want to put some proposals to the Minister, and I hope that she will be able to respond to them.

I shall begin with the broad thrust of the Government's economic policy. Within the past couple of weeks the House has had a chance to consider the Government's White Paper on public expenditure and the Budget. The 500,000 citizens of Liverpool awaited the Chancellor's Budget statement with great expectations. As the pundits raked over the entrails during the run-up to the Budget announcement, many commentators predicted that extra resources would be made available to fight poverty or to combat mass unemployment. The commentators, like the citizens of Liverpool, were badly disappointed. Liverpool people waited in vain as the Chancellor's statement meandered on to hear what he intended to do about unemployment. It was on that criterion alone that the Budget was to be judged in the north of England.

The absence of any proposal of substance led many of us to the conclusion that the Government, and perhaps particularly the Prime Minister, do not care. The right hon. Lady does not seem to care about Liverpool or about the unemployed generally. It is not that the people of Liverpool or I blame her for every person who has become unemployed, although one person has become unemployed every minute of every day since the Government were elected in 1979. It is not even that we blame her for everything that is wrong in Liverpool or Britain. However, people do blame her for not caring. Liverpool seems to be treated like some sort of distant outpost of the empire—out of sight, out of mind. If the Prime Minister occasionally came to see for herself the heartbreak which her policies have created, I do not believe that it would leave even the hardest-hearted person unmoved.

Last week the Prime Minister and the Chancellor had certain choices. They could either do something about unemployment, or cut taxes, in this case by 1p in the pound. She chose to cut taxes, and we are confidently told that the £1 billion give-away is the prelude to a further bonanza of between £4 billion and £5 billion next year, reducing the standard rate to 25p in the pound.

In examining the choice that the Prime Minister made, it is evident once again that unemployment has been given a low priority. She could have used that £1 billion to create thousands of construction jobs or to cut by 10 per cent. the national insurance contribution that employers pay. Either way, it would have created jobs. If the Prime Minister cares, she could have used that £1 billion to improve on the 40p increase coming to pensioners in July, or to help pay their fuel bills after the shivering cold winter. She could have used that £1 billion to fight poverty and create a fairer Britain. Instead, she gave it all away, just like she has frittered away the £30 billion oil revenue that has come into our country's coffers over the past six years. That is money which should have been used to invest in Britain's future.

Our economy under the Government has been run rather like a giant jumble sale, where everything must go. National assets, resources and companies such as Westland, Land Rover and British Leyland—some £7 billion of national assets—have been flogged off at knock-down prices in the past five years. Another £14 billion worth is earmarked for similar treatment between now and 1989.

Notwithstanding the morality of such policies, perhaps my complaint about the economic thrust would be lessened if I could see any evidence that this country's considerable resources were being reinvested to create a happier and more prosperous Britain. However, popular capitalism, as it has come to be known, which presumably implies that everybody should have a stake, is simply not available or relevant to the unemployed, the poor, the powerless or the alienated in our inner cities. Deliberately encouraging people to care for number one and abandon their concern for others deepens the divisions in Britain.

Another aspect of the Government's general economic approach as it affects Liverpool deeply troubles me. It concerns the social and economic cost of leaving so many people without work. In the United Kingdom, in 1986, it is estimated that it will cost some £23 billion to keep 3·4 million people out of work. The bill comes to £2·5 billion on Merseyside alone. Apart from the personal trauma which being unemployed causes anyone who loses his job, the waste of resources is self-evident. This year, we will spend as a nation three times more on social security than on education, ten times more than on law and order and transport, three times more than on health, and seven times more than on housing or creating jobs. That is popular capitalism in action.

The social consequences of unemployment are also enormous. To realise that one has only to look at the crime rate in areas of mass unemployment. In Liverpool, one crime takes place very three minutes and half the crimes are committed by unemployed young people. Thousands of young people have filled their empty lives with the quick fix of the heroin pusher, others have committed suicide, and yet others have been made easy cannon fodder for Derek Hatton's Militants. It is in that context that the Government's economic policies must be judged. It is a picture which serves to underline the sheer irrelevance of tax cuts when so many other priorities were waiting to be tackled.

Turning from the general picture, I said that I would paint some detail on to the canvas. Nine hundred years

ago, William the Conqueror commissioned the Domesday Book as a survey of the state of the nation. It revealed a divided nation. The survey was taken in the aftermath of William's campaign to break the spirit of the dissidents and rebels of the north. After that, he was also to be known as the harrier of the north. The Domesday Book reveals an economy that was ruthlessly destroyed in order to create fear and subservience among the citizens.

There are clearly some parallels which could be drawn with today. Unemployment in the north has been used as a way of keeping the people down, of creating a climate of fear. Jobs have been destroyed, often quite needlessly, all in the name of political dogma, and, to some extent, because of the Prime Minister's personal vanity. It is now six years since the Prime Minister said that she hoped that unemployment would not hit 2·5 million. It was in the same year that she correctly observed that poverty, wherever, it exists, is the enemy of stability. Today 3·4 million people are jobless. In cities like Liverpool political stability has been ruptured, partly thanks to the abdication by the Government of their responsibility for the welfare of their citizens.

Today, there are a phenomenal 107,891 Liverpool people on the dole—one in five—comprising 78,321 men and 29,570 women. We should look a little more closely at the profile of those who are unemployed. Among young people, the prospects of getting a job are negligible. A staggering 42,000 under the age of 24 are without work, and there is a youth unemployment rate of 39 per cent.

People are also being consigned to the dole for much longer periods—almost indefinite periods in some cases. Whereas, in 1979, 37 per cent. of unemployment was for more than a year's duration, by 1985 that figure had risen to 53 per cent. The continuing massive level of unemployment and the length of unemployment inevitably have cumulative effects on personal incomes and social conditions in the city generally. The loss of jobs, more part-time work and a growing proportion of female employment is leading to a relative decline in income levels. By way of example, in 1981, 28 per cent. of children in the city received free school meals. By last year, the proportion was over 50 per cent.

Compounding Liverpool's unemployment problem has been the huge loss of population. This should serve as a warning to those who prescribe the purchase of bicycle clips as a way of solving unemployment. People have been leaving Liverpool hand over fist, and look where it has left us. Liverpool has lost a third of its population in the last 25 years. Between 1966 and 1971 we lost people at the rate of 22,000 a year. Between 1971 and 1981 they left at the rate of 8,740 a year. Over the last five years they have left at the rate of 6,500 a year. This has bled the city of ratepayers, self-starters and entrepreneurs.

There are also proportionately more people in vulnerable groups. The growth in pensioner households, the over-80s—the fastest growing group in the city—single parents, the unemployed and the permanently sick place impossible demands on the local authority's reduced resources and on its services. The sombre and chilling reality for Liverpool is that, if job losses do not slow down, migration will again increase as the more mobile seek job opportunities elsewhere. This will simply further compound Liverpool's problems and turn it into a ghost town.

It is to this change in Liverpool's demography that the Government must address themselves. Liverpool, 1986, is not Liverpool, 1971. In 1971, 42·1 per cent. of the total population were employed and 4·5 per cent. were unemployed. By 1985 that had changed to 34 per cent. being employed, with 12·7 per cent. of the total population being unemployed. This meant that 20 per cent. of the total employable work force were out of work.

Other things have changed, too. During the same period the number of children has fallen by a third. In 1971 they comprised a quarter of the population. In 1985 they comprised only a fifth. During the same period the number of retired people rose from 13·6 to 17·8 per cent. It is in this context of desperate need and changed circumstances that the Government's economic policies must be judged. It is in this context of a dole queue which has doubled between 1971 and 1981 that the House must judge the relevance or sense of the Government's present economic policies.

I said that I would turn to a third area. This concerns the immediate implications of Government policies in Liverpool. Since 1979, the Government have cut some £285 million of rate support grant. In addition, we have lost £30 million from higher education, £98 million in housing subsidies and £150 million from the housing programme. During the last two years the city council has destroyed a perfectly good case in pleading for a reversal of this disastrous national policy by hurtling the city and its citizens towards chaos at each and every opportunity. Derek Hatton has played right into the Prime Minister's hands.

The latest damning indictment of Militant Labour's tactics was published only yesterday in a 47-page report by Mr. Tim McMahon, the district auditor. He says that he has never seen an administration act as irresponsibly as this one has done. The council has undoubtedly damaged Liverpool's reputation to the point where some constituents have told me that they are ashamed even to admit to outsiders that they come from a city of which its citizens have been traditionally proud.

At midnight on 2 April, if there is no appeal by the 48 Labour councillors who have been disqualified from public office because of the reckless way in which they have run the city, the city's affairs will be in the hands of sensible people: Liberals, sensible members of the Labour party and Conservatives. I hope that they will unite to give the city the leadership that it deserves, but they will need resources. There is an immediate deficit of £37 million to be faced.

I must warn the Government that there is no point in sending emissaries to Sir Trevor Jones, the leader of the Liberal group, telling him to make cuts by sacking the work force. During the years that we were in control, we never made a single person compulsorily redundant, and we do not intend to start now. Sacking people in Liverpool will simply lead to social disorder on a grand scale. What is needed is a sensitive and humanitarian response, or we will create the climate for Militant to whip up more bitterness, hatred and sectarian discord.

May I also plead with the Government that if the councillors decide to appeal, the Lord Chancellor has a duty to ensure that those appeals are heard as rapidly as possible, so that this long-running saga may be quickly brought to an end.

The final part of my remarks are concerned with positive proposals, which I hope the Minister will

[Mr. David Alton]

examine. First, after the disappearance of the Merseyside county council as an umbrella organisation, a number of useful initiatives could disappear. I hope that the Government will accept some responsibility for that. Particularly, I refer, as I did at the outset of my remarks, to the construction of the Mersey barrage. If a barrage were created across the Mersey, not only would it impound the Mersey and create massive recreational facilities, but it would create a third of the electricity requirements of the area and a new deep sea water facility for berthing ocean-going vessels in the mouth of the Mersey. It would also create a massive number of jobs in the construction industry. It would be a symbol of hope for the people of Liverpool.

Archbishop Warlock, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool, said at a civic service just two weeks ago:

> "Just at this time our city and much of the County lies wounded. But for the spirit of the people it might well be hard to maintain hope. If we are to counter what we believe to be a false image of our part of the country, we must not only pick ourselves up but as one body work together to renew the life and activity of a people who brought greatness to Merseyside. There are new opportunities, new challenges to be faced: new goals to be won . . . Perhaps the new much-discussed Mersey Barrage is the symbol we need. A renewed role for the old Mersey. New jobs. Improved environment. A new source of energy for ourselves and for many more throughout our land."

The barrage would also be a symbol of partnership between private and public enterprise. I hope it is one that the Government will back.

I hope that the Minister will also say a word or two about the possibility of moving the intervention board headquarters from Reading to Liverpool. I know that the Government are considering this proposition and that bids have been put in by Manchester Conservative Members of Parliament to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I have written to him on this question this week, and I hope that we will be given some news.

I hope also that when the franchise for Granada Television in the north of England is renewed, the Minister will consider splitting the franchise and creating a new television station based on Merseyside. That would help to create many jobs in the entertainment industry. Liverpool is famous for its comedians—although we never thought that we would see them running the city council—and for its musicians, actors, playwrights and poets. A new television station would help to improve Merseyside's image. Liverpool people as well as the Minister should address their minds to the point that, unless we improve the image of our conurbation, we cannot hope to bring new enterprise to the area.

With the disappearance of the county council there will be a need for a regional development agency, along the lines of the Scottish model, and for a tourist board. We should look at the ways in which we support the local free port, which has been very successful. Last year more than £17 million of work came through the free port. If changes in the operation of VAT were made in the free port, more business would be attracted.

Voluntary organisations, which create much work in Liverpool, are in extreme difficulty because of funding cuts. The local council has been intransigent in assuming the responsibilities previously held by the county councils. Although I am grateful to Lord Elton for the help that he has given and for meeting the groups that I have taken to see him, I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will say more about this matter.

In conclusion, I hope that, in the longer term, we will see a complete reversal of the Government's damaging economic policies. I very much hope that the Chancellor will take the opportunity in his autumn statement to redress some of the grievances that I have mentioned——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I hope the hon. Member appreciates that this debate should finish at 1.30 pm. If he wants the Under-Secretary of State to reply, he should conclude quickly.

Mr. Alton: I was on my last sentence, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I did say, "In conclusion." I hope that the Chancellor in his autumn statement will redress some of the grievances that I have mentioned and use some of the moneys in the unusually large Contingency Fund to tackle the nation's decaying infrastructure and especially the problems of Liverpool.

1.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I shall respond as briefly as I can to the important subject raised by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton). In his opening remarks he attacked the Government for their economic policies. I was somewhat surprised to learn of his view and to see that he totally ignored the realities. There has been a clear recovery of our economy, with 3·5 per cent. more growth, providing the stability and security that will help to overcome many of the difficulties faced by northern cities such as Liverpool. I shall come to the hon. Gentleman's point about positive unemployment measures which the Government have taken in the Budget.

On the general points about the north, I should like to point out that local government as a whole, irrespective of its political control, can take up the advantages of Government initiatives—Newcastle, for example, has managed to take advantage of them—and provide the infrastructure for those cities, which have undoubtedly suffered with the disappearance of traditional businesses and industries, but which have now begun to regenerate themselves with great assistance from the Government. Liverpool, alas, did not take advantage of those Government initiatives, because of the curious leadership on the council. To a certain extent, therefore, it is Liverpool's fault that much of what could have been done to help the Liverpool people, for whom all of us have great sympathy, was ignored.

The hon. Member for Mossley Hill referred to a great deal of money which should have gone to Liverpool council and could have helped the city to make a better recovery. I must point out that the city could always have earned more money if there had been sensible planning and if it had used the efficient methods of running local government used by many councils. For example, in 1985-86, Liverpool city council had a budget of £265 million, which led to the city being rate capped. Under these proposals, the city was given a grant of only £30 million. Because the council had to bring its budget down to £222 million, it earned itself an extra £90 million. That happened simply because of the necessity to behave properly. That gave the city a total of £119 million of Government grant, which was much better than anything the councillors had originally proposed.

I understand that the district auditor's report has just been sent to the council. The hon. Member for Mossley Hill will appreciate that that is a matter between the district auditor and the councillors. We understand that it is a private report. We shall be extremely interested to see what it says and to note the council's response.

At the heart of the Government's policies relating directly to Liverpool is a recognition of the fact that for many years Liverpool's economy has been in decline. We have believed that to achieve a wider regeneration of the area priority must be given to creating a climate in which the private sector is encouraged to grow. That will enable the spirit of enterprise and innovation to flourish, in just the same way as I have mentioned that it has and can flourish in other cities in the north. The Government's policies have therefore been geared to provide the means for improving the quality of the local environment, living conditions, and working skills of people. In consequence, that should make the area more attractive to local entrepreneurs and private investors as a place to develop and expand their businesses, and I could give many examples where that has happened.

The hon. Member for Mossley Hill is aware that Liverpool, as a development area, receives the highest level of Government support when firms decide to move in or to expand their businesses in that area. It receives a high allocation of funds from the Manpower Services Commission's programmes which are aimed at youth training, the community programme and the enterprise allowance scheme. It is a partnership authority under the Inner Urban Areas Act 1978, receiving a high level of aid from the Department's urban programme. Within its area there is an urban development corporation geared to regenerating extensive areas of Liverpool dockland and the enterprise zone at Speke designated in 1981 to encourage new industrial and commercial development. As the hon. Gentleman rightly mentioned, there is a free port, which, I am glad to hear, he is happy to encourage in its operation. Much has been attempted to assist and underpin the decline in Liverpool.

A massive £24 million was committed through the urban programme alone. As the hon. Gentleman said, the city council chose, unwisely in the Government's view, not to direct this money towards economic and industrial regeneration. I do not want to dwell on the council's failures. I should like to say, however, that it is important to recognise that the Government have, through their urban programme, provided a unique opportunity for job creation and economic development. Unfortunately, so far, the council has refused to take up that opportunity.

Liverpool has benefited from the Government's policy of targeting derelict land grant towards sites with hard after-uses, particularly in industrial and commercial development. Some £8·5 million has been spent since 1983 to reclaim sites for industry and generally to improve the quality of the environment, and to encourage investors into the area. No doubt the hon. Gentleman knows that one of the most spectacular examples of that occurred within his constituency, at Wavertree.

The hon. Gentleman will know that in 1981 the Government established the Merseyside development corporation to regenerate no fewer than 865 acres of massively derelict and disused dockland at the heart of the area. It was recognised from the outset that substantial public funding would be required to achieve the corporation's objectives. All in all, capital expenditure so far in Liverpool has totalled £97 million.

I would remind the hon. Gentleman that the corporation successfully mounted the first ever international garden festival to be held in this country. It attracted about 3·3 million visitors, and its great success brought new confidence to the area. I hope that that will continue to operate successfully under the private sector development initiative.

The co-operation of Government Departments in the way that I have said has also produced other new developments. For example, nine information technology centres, four commercial business centres, and three small firms workshops have been set up in the wider Merseyside area, all designed to assist in the training of people, particularly in new technology.

Most recently, as the hon. Gentleman will know, the task force has been encouraging the establishment of job clubs, which are aimed specifically at helping the long-term unemployed to find work. About 11 such centres are to be established in Liverpool this year.

I should like to consider some of the problems that have been raised about unemployment. The hon. Gentleman will know that the Government place great emphasis on the need to raise the level of skills and provide training and retraining facilities for both youngsters and adults in Liverpool. In 1985-86, 12,000 places will have been filled on youth and adult training schemes. Places have been provided under the community programme and the voluntary project programme, and support for initiative and enterprise has been given by the enterprise alliance scheme. So far, over 300 people have taken advantage of that. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Budget proposals last week included further initiatives for training under the community programme, many of which I hope and trust will find support in the city of Liverpool.

All those policies for Liverpool, or indeed anywhere else, are not just about providing finance, but about stimulating ideas, organisation and co-operation for new initiatives. That is what the Merseyside task force has been doing. There are no easy answers. The hon. Gentleman referred to population losses. I believe that in many ways they show the deep-rooted failure of the city council to address itself to the assistance made available to it by the Government and to tackle sensibly and efficiently the underlying problems that Liverpool faces simply through the decline of industry.

Although there are no quick or easy answers, I have outlined some of the measures that the Government have taken and which I believe are now beginning to show signs of making an impact in restoring confidence. Any alternatives involving greater sums of money would be successful in the long term only if they worked in co-operation with the private sector. The London docklands experience has given much weight to the argument that Government investment in any great city such as Liverpool will benefit the people living there only if the private sector has the confidence to add much larger sums. Newcastle, again, is a good example of the help that such initiatives can provide.

I am afraid that the attitude of Liverpool city council has not been helpful in contributing to and supporting this effort. Unfortunately, its approach has been both narrow and municipal, it has largely ignored the possibilities of the private and voluntary sectors, and it has been very

[Mrs. Angela Rumbold]

wasteful of resources. It would have done better to interest itself in developments such as housing co-operatives to ensure that money was spent greatly to the benefit of people living in Liverpool, rather than adopting what I regard as a rather narrow and intransigent approach.

The previous Liberal administration must also take some responsibility for perhaps failing to tackle the inefficient delivery of many basic council services, especially in housing. I hope that the new views which now prevail will assist in that respect.

I am glad that the city has now decided to act sensibly and to set a rate for 1986-87. It is well known that rates are an important factor in determining the location and success of businesses. Rate capping has prevented the worst excesses of profligate authorities, but there can be no place for inefficiency or poor management in the delivery of local authority services in an area fighting for its economic life. Like any other authority, Liverpool must now live within its means if it is to make significant progress towards recovery.

I cannot speculate on which party will take office in Liverpool or who will be leader of the city council after the local elections, but any new council will clearly have a hard task to put right the problems of the past and will face some of the same constraints as the present council. For instance, the rate limit for next year has already been debated and approved by the House. I can say, however, that if there is a change of leadership the Government will look forward to working with a council which has a real desire to make progress in partnership with the Government towards real improvements for the people of the city of Liverpool.

It is untrue to say that the Government do not care about the way in which the people of Liverpool have to live. I believe that much is due to the fact that the city council has brought only financial and economic harm to the city in past years. The Government will certainly find it easier to work with a council which is prepared to use all the available resources to promote the well-being of the city. We have urged that course on the present council, but, alas, to no avail.

Finally, I should like briefly to refer to the positive points that the hon. Gentleman made.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must remind the Minister that we are now eating into the time allocated for the next debate and taking the time allocated to other hon. Members.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am very well aware of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and will finish in less than a minute. I accept the hon. Gentleman's positive suggestions about specific areas in which the Government and a responsible city council could encourage the regeneration of the area.

Air Safety

1.35 pm

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): I declare an interest as deputy chairman of the all-party air safety group.

Nineteen eighty-five was the worst year ever for civil aviation fatalities throughout the world. A total of 1,984 people were killed in major airline accidents. That is a horrifying number, yet in percentage terms those fatalities represent considerably fewer than 1 per cent. of passengers carried by the world's airlines. That figure shows the underlying safety of flying. Bearing in mind the size and complexity of a modern airliner, those figures speak volumes for the reliability and efficiency of airliners. Yet, because of those accidents, one must admit that an unease has crept into the minds of many would-be air travellers. I believe that that unease is founded on the fact that so many of the deaths seem to result from circumstances well within existing technology and that have caused other fatal injuries over the years.

The argument runs thus: if those risks were known already, why had nothing been done to eliminate them? What is more, the defence that the risk was too slight to warrant the expenditure on the necessary safety precautions is not much comfort to the bereaved or to those who have lain in hospital as a result of such accidents. They may fairly argue that if an airline says that it takes good care of you it means what it says, as it does when it says that it puts people first, or talks of its efficiency. People may presume that when an airline boasts about its passenger seats it is implying that it combines strength with comfort and design—not that, too often, they are 10g seats in a 20g aircraft for a 40g man, or, in other words, that they are not stressed for the strains with which they may have to deal.

Last but by no means least, there is a general assumption that, as weaknesses or faults are discovered by airlines, these faults are notified to some central authority that, after consultation with the aircraft makers, issues advice to all operators of that aeroplane. Sadly, almost all those assumptions are mistaken. Certainly airlines care about carrying passengers. That is why they exist. However, whether they are as safety-conscious as they could be depends on one's expectations and on the amount that airline passengers are prepared to pay for increased safety.

In fact, airline advertisements never refer to safety. No matter from which country the company flies, the emphasis is on punctuality, good service, comfort, food and very often the good looks of the air hostesses. There is virtually never any emphasis on safety. It may be that airlines do not believe that safety is a sales feature. Perhaps they wish to give the impression that flying is so intrinsically safe that safety may be taken for granted. As I have said, flying is remarkably safe. It is 16 times safer today than it was in 1950. However, whereas in 1984 the odds on being killed in a civil air crash were one in 3·7 million, in 1985 those odds had shortened to one in 600,000 passengers carried.

More worrying still are the number of near misses reported, which must give cause for concern because of their possible consequences if they had become accidents.

It is not easy to pinpoint the reasons for increased accidents and fatalities because they have such a wide

variety of causes and characteristics. We can only say that every nation operating an airline has a responsibility—as do the manufacturers, the engine makers and the component suppliers. They, in turn, must follow the rules laid down by the national and international safety authorities, of which the Federal Aviation Administration in America and our Civil Aviation Authority are among the better known. It is to those bodies and to the International Civil Aviation Organisation that we must turn to discover the regulations and how they are administered.

ICAO possesses the accident investigation group, which was described to me recently as having

"no money and no teeth."

It seeks to update safety regulations on an international basis, but it is often slow to act. When my hon. Friend the Minister replies perhaps he will tell me whether the ICAO air navigation commission has yet updated the regulations relating to co-ordination between civil and military authorities, and to interception, following the shooting down of the Korean Boeing 747 by Russian fighters over the Sea of Japan in 1983.

Until the time of that disaster there was no ICAO requirement for civil aircraft to have the VHF international distress frequency selected at all times. That means that, if a civil aircraft wanders off course and is intercepted, radio contact can be made by the interceptor aircraft.

The Korean 747 was off course for three hours, but, apparently, was unaware of the interception that had been made by the Russian aircraft until it was too late. Perhaps my hon. Friend will tell me that the position is now different and that the ICAO regulations have been updated. If so, I am unaware of it. The long intervals that appear to take place in the updating of international safety regulations gives me considerable cause for concern.

Nearer home, how does the CAA measure up as a watchdog for our air safety? The main criticism that I have heard of it is that it reacts after the event because it possesses neither a research centre nor the funds to carry out research into safety. It is certainly true that too often it follows the American FAA or US National Transportation Safety Board in what they do. While the FAA introduced its fire resistance standard for aircraft passenger seats in October 1984, for example, the CAA introduced its regulations in June 1985 and updated them in January 1986, admittedly to a higher standard.

One cannot help feeling that that updating took place because of the dreadful fire disaster at Manchester airport last August when 55 people died in a British Airways Boeing 737 while it was still on the ground. Having seen the burnt-out fuselage of that aircraft, I can only say that it is a miracle that anyone escaped alive, especially as the interior furnishings and lockers were completely destroyed by the fire, as were most of the seats. Passengers using the mid-fuselage emergency exit found that they had to clamber across three seats to reach those exits, or, if they were in the forward part of the cabin, to pass one at a time through a narrow space between the forward galleys, only to discover that one of the forward exit doors had jammed shut for precious seconds which might have saved lives.

When I saw the fuselage by courtesy of the air accident investigation branch, I was told that normally evacuation tests on aircraft require that only 50 per cent. of emergency exists needed to be open to prove that they were satisfactory. Needless to say, the front exit doors had not been included in that test.

I make those points, not to anticipate the findings of the inquest which is soon to be held on that crash or the inquiry which will be held later this year, but because those hazards could have been anticipated. The tragic effect of fire in an airliner cabin is well known, just as it is known that most passengers die from the hydrogen cyanide and carbon monoxide fumes given off by burning polyurethane seats. But it is only now that we are demanding fire blocking materials. By the same token, evacuation procedures using a mix of exits could have been introduced so that all the exits are tested on British civil airlines. And what about the galleys on the 737? They should have been recognised for what they are, a barrier to evacuation.

All this is hindsight, but so too are the CAA regulations of January 1986 which now contain instructions on how to improve certain mid-cabin emergency exits and on how to provide floor level emergency escape path lighting. They also contain a number of other improvements, but what else should we be looking at? What about the blocked off over-wing exits on the 747? What about the large bits that regularly fall off aircraft in Berkshire after aircraft have taken off from London airport? No airline ever seems to claim those bits. What about the strength of passenger seats, the benefits of shoulder and lap straps rather than seat belts, and overhead lockers that are less flammable and have burst-proof locks to spare passengers a torrent of heavy objects falling on their heads in an accident? The list is long.

In 1982 the magazine *Flight*, under the heading "1,850 needless crash victims", commented that a recent report on cabin safety in large transport aircraft prepared by the United States National Transportation Safety Board showed that

"the authorities have been almost asleep on the question of crash forces in cabin safety for years."

That is quite an indictment. Other questions spring to mind about the safety of operating large twin-engined aircraft like the Airbus over long stretches of sea. That issue is facing us at the moment and not enough has been said about it, either by the CAA or by the Department of Transport. Cracks were recently discovered in the fuselages of aging jumbo jets and the CAA is following, and admitting that it is following, the directives issued by the Federal Aviation Administration.

All these matters deserve research and consideration. When he gave the Brancker memorial lecture in February, Sir John Dent, chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority, said:

"It is not the job of the CAA to sponsor research on aviation development and advances in technology in the field. That is the job of aircraft manufacturers, the avionics industry and the materials industry, but it is our job to understand the safety implications of developments in technology and use and to be able to set meaningful safety standards and tests. It used to be that the Government research establishments were fully available for research but economic stringency and perhaps some divergence of civil and defence research have largely closed off those resources. The situation is worrying, not least because our influence in international circles is directly dependent on our knowledge of and contribution to aviation safety."

His words are timely and important if we want air safety to be given its proper priority. One solution would be to fund the CAA and the accident investigation branch so that they could emulate the wider roles of the FAA and the NTSB in America. Such a solution would probably be both wasteful of resources and administratively unworkable on the scale we could afford.

[Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson]

Some suggest that the Airworthiness Requirements Board could fulfil the role, but it is something of a part-time body and scarcely suitable. Thus, one is drawn to the conclusion that a new body is needed standing apart from the CAA, the AAIB and the ARB but working closely with them. In effect, I am suggesting a national aviation safety centre. If such a centre was created, its obvious home would seem to be the College of Aeronautics at Cranfield. As I am sure my hon. Friend is aware, Cranfield has a long and distinguished record in aviation research. Its work on all aspects of aircraft design, manufacture and operation is recognised internationally. I suggest that it could fulfil the role of an aviation safety centre and give back to the United Kingdom the research facility to invest in air safety before the event, which must be to the benefit of the tens of millions of air passengers who fly in and out of the United Kingdom every year and the hundreds of millions of passengers who fly internationally.

1.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): I am sure that the House will be extremely grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) for having raised the issue of air safety. As my hon. Friend knows, responsibility for civil aviation rests by statute with the Civil Aviation Authority. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State appoints the chairman of the authority and the members of its board and he must satisfy himself that the authority is discharging properly the various responsibilities which Parliament has entrusted to the CAA to ensure safety. However, neither my right hon. Friend nor I must seek to usurp the authority's responsibilities.

I am sure that the House will be the first to recognise that all the expertise in this crucial area lies with the authority, not with politicians and their officials. Not that many years ago, before the authority was set up, responsibility was divided between a number of bodies. Not surprisingly, this division of responsibility was not entirely satisfactory, so much so that the Edwards committee, which examined these matters extremely carefully in producing its report on British air transport in the 1970s, found:

"A situation has arisen in which each authority has felt obliged to act only within its own limited field of responsibility."

The committee concluded that it would be better to create conditions which guarded against that happening. It saw advantage in a pooling of responsibilities and information on safety.

Almost inevitably, as a result of its own logic, the committee was driven to recommend the formation of the Civil Aviation Authority, with a unified responsibility for safety matters. I believe that that logic still holds true today. The authority has a spectrum of safety responsibilities. Its safety services group has nearly 700 staff. Its role is to set standards and to satisfy itself that airlines are competent, that Britain's airports and aerodromes are safe, that pilots are properly trained and medically fit, and that aircraft are designed, built and maintained to the highest standards.

The duty of the national air traffic services is to ensure that aircraft can fly safely in Britain's crowded air space. It supplies air traffic control services, licenses controllers and inspects aerodromes to ensure that proper standards are maintained.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson *rose——*

Mr. Spicer: I shall give way to my hon. Friend, but I ask him to understand that I am under some pressure because of the timing of debates.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: It seems that what my hon. Friend says may be true of the CAA, but how can it be an effective safety regulator if it cannot research into the possible causes of future accidents?

Mr. Spicer: If my hon. Friend gives me the opportunity, and if the House will bear with me—I suspect that I shall stretch the time that has been alloted for this debate—I shall address myself directly to that issue.

The CAA's concerns for safety extend beyond the purely domestic. It maintains the closest contact with regulatory authorities overseas and plays a major role in the counsels of the International Civil Aviation Organisation. In my direct experience, the ICAO can move swiftly on occasions. I have in mind especially its reaction and response recently to aviation security. In direct response to my hon. Friend's question, the ICAO has agreed an amendment to the Chicago convention to cover the military interception of civil aircraft. The amendment needs to be ratified by a sufficient number of states if it is to be brought into force. A recurring problem stems from the need for mutual and international co-operation within the ICAO. I do not see, however, how we can overcome the need for compliance by member states.

My hon. Friend fears that international co-operation is at a low ebb and of a low quality. Sir John Dent, the authority's chairman, was right to voice his worries about some recent developments. Clearly the CAA and the Government must work to ensure that the traditional international spirit of co-operation in aviation safety matters is maintained, but we should not over-dramatise the problem.

Close co-operation is still the norm, not the exception. for example, there is a close relationship between all the major European agencies on joint airworthiness standards. Contact between the CAA and the FAA in the United States, following the Manchester disaster to which my hon. Friend referred, took place almost by the hour. As my hon. Friend will know, personnel from the FAA are permanently in Britain and, similarly, CAA personnel stay with the FAA.

My hon. Friend has also expressed concern about the sealing of overwing emergency exits on Boeing 747s. In response to that, the FAA organised, at the CAA's request, an evacuation test using a British Airways crew. I can report that the 90-second evacuation standard was met.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): With or without plimsolls?

Mr. Spicer: I suspect that that point was well taken on board before that evacuation. I am not sure, but I should be surprised if, after all the publicity, plimsolls were worn on this occasion. However, that would need to be confirmed.

Nevertheless, we must try, if only by the example set by the CAA, to ensure that some of the difficulties which have arisen recently do not recur.

My hon. Friend has asked about safety research. As he will know, safety research is currently funded by a combination of Government Departments, the CAA and the manufacturing and airline industries. It may be that the contribution from the industry will have to increase in the future. We are currently considering the whole question with the CAA and the Department of Trade and Industry. We shall certainly take into account the real concerns that my hon. Friend has expressed today and the points that he has raised in that context.

I suspect that it will be no solution simply to fund research programmes carried out by an independent body. It has been suggested that the Government should give Cranfield Institute of Aviation Research £2 million for unsponsored research. That would not help for at least two reasons. First, if there is a funding problem, it is no solution simply to say that the Government can solve it by giving a relatively small sum to one particular institution. My hon. Friend will probably accept that what is needed is a long-term viable solution. But, more importantly, research into aviation safety is co-ordinated by the Civil Aviation Research and Development Board.

We must avoid the danger of fragmenting the United Kingdom's research effort and in the process getting priorities wrong. It would be even less attractive to expect a body such as the Cranfield institute to devise or even recommend standards for safety, as my hon. Friend rather ingeniously suggested this afternoon.

As I have already mentioned, the strength of the CAA as a regulator of safety lies in the integration within one authority of responsibility for all the different areas of safety. We simply cannot begin to strip out certain areas and give them to some other body, however responsible or expert it may be. Not only would the authority begin to lose international credibility; we would also return inevitably to the days of the 1960s and before when too many organisations had responsibilities for safety questions. The Edwards report warned of the problems of divided responsibility. It gave us the solution in the form of the CAA, and that solution has worked well. It would be a serious mistake to begin to unpick the authority's role in safety matters.

It is, of course, true that no single body can carry out safety research on its own. No one has all the expertise. The CAA draws on research carried out in a number of centres, both here and overseas, in setting standards. But experience worldwide has shown that separating the setting of standards from their enforcement is a mistake.

The test of whether the present arrangements work, and of whether the CAA has properly discharged its responsibilities, lies in the safety record of civil aviation in this country. If we look at the general safety record over the past decade, the picture is reassuring, although we and the CAA must, as has been rightly insisted upon by hon. Members, guard against complacency. As my hon. Friend has said, 1985 was a bad year. But, as I think he conceded, in only three years in the previous decade were there fatal accidents involving fixed-wing aircraft of over 2,300 kg on the British register, carrying passengers for public transport. The record for passenger public transport operations involving helicopters was almost equally good, despite the harsh North sea environment in which so many services operate.

During the same period, the incidence of risk-bearing air misses involving civil aircraft more than halved, although the skies over the United Kingdom have become more and more crowded. The record is a good one, but, as I have said, we cannot risk complacency. That is why the CAA acted so swiftly after the tragic events at Manchester. Within hours of the accident, all similarly engined aircraft on the British register were subject to new inspection criteria and, where necessary, were grounded until safety checks had been completed. As evidence has emerged from the accident investigation, the authority has acted swiftly to introduce new standards for emergency exits and escape route markings. New regulations dealing with the fire resistance of seats were introduced three months before the accident. The authority has acted with the same speed and good sense over the question of cracks in Boeing 747s.

Neither the authority nor Parliament can ever take lightly the safety of aviation in this country. The standards of safety which the CAA demands may be the best achievable today, but it can and does strive to see how those standards can be improved. Parliament made a wise decision when it brought within one authority the responsibility for all the many aspects of safety regulations. We must not disturb that arrangement either by seeking to take away from the CAA matters in which it, and it alone, is expert, or by seeking to undermine its authority in other ways. It is right that we should all be concerned to ensure that the CAA promotes and maintains the highest safety standards. The record clearly shows that the authority has done that, and that where necessary it will act swiftly to remedy problems that unexpectedly come to light. However, I repeat that my hon. Friend has done us a great service by bringing this issue before us today.

Elderly People (Residential Care)

2.2 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Although I am a Scottish Member of Parliament, most of my speech will be devoted to the problem of residential care for the elderly in England.

However, I shall first comment briefly on the situation in Scotland. Recent statistics from the House of Commons Library show that the regulation system in Scotland is not as sophisticated as that in England. The regularly produced statistics do not distinguish private homes from other non-local authority homes. They imply that the expansion of the private sector has not been as marked in Scotland as it has been in England. In 1979, there were 176 such private homes, whereas in 1984, the latest year for which figures are available, there were 193. That is a 10 per cent. increase. I do not know the reasons for that. In the same period, the increase in England was 100 per cent. My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) has just informed me that the Tory-controlled Grampian regional authority has decided that it will build no further homes for the elderly in Scotland.

Generally, elderly people are more dependent than others on social services such as the National Health Service and community services provided by local councils such as home helps and sheltered housing. Most retirement pensioners have to struggle for existence with the help of supplementary benefit because the basic pension is so inadequate.

One basic requirement for elderly people is clean, comfortable and warm living accommodation at rents or charges they can pay without financial worry. Most old folk prefer their own independent accommodation where they can enjoy privacy and the possession of their own furniture and objects of sentimental value. The next best is sheltered housing provided, in the main, by the local council, with qualified staff, attendants, constant supervision and provision for privacy. I have had an exciting and moving experience of such provision in my constituency. It is organised by the Labour-controlled Fife authority.

Throughout the country there is a mix of provision by local councils—which are non-profit making—voluntary bodies and private, profit-making institutions. The community at large has an obligation to ensure that old folk and other vulnerable people, such as the mentally or physically disabled, are properly cared for by the community, paid for by the community. The private, profit-making sector has only a limited role.

I shall put some facts and figures on the record. Written answers to questions tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 2 March 1984, and by my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on 26 July 1984, indicate the trend. My hon. Friend the Member for Burnley asked for information on the provision of private and voluntary homes for the elderly since 1979 in the various regions in England and Wales. I shall not put all the figures on record, but I think that I should mention a few.

The figures cover a geographical stretch from the north-east of England to Devon. In 1979, Tyne and Wear had 32 privately run homes; in 1983, it had 39. West Yorkshire had 57 such homes in 1979, and 96 in 1983. Merseyside had 55 in 1979, and 101 in 1983. The west midlands had 25 in 1979 and 59 in 1983. Lincolnshire had 20 in 1979, and 44 in 1983. Norfolk had 41 in 1979 and 88 in 1983.

In the south of England the attractions are obvious. It has a milder climate, and a more desirable environment in many other ways. Dorset had 117 private residential homes in 1979 and 196 in 1983. East and West Sussex together had 294 in 1979 and 447 in 1983. Avon had 52 in 1979 and 96 in 1983. Devon had 217 in 1979 and 371 in 1983. If one adds up the figures for all those regions the total number of private residential homes was 910 in 1979 and 1,537 in 1983.

My hon. Friend the Member for Peckham, in a parliamentary question, asked for the local authority provision for March 1984. The total in England showed that there were 2,673 local authority homes, 4,090 in the private sector and 1 152 in the voluntary sector. Roughly half of the homes were provided by local authorities and slightly half the places available were local authority places.

It is worth noting that, in Dorset, which is predominantly Tory-controlled, there are only 37 local authority homes as compared with 215 private homes. In Hampshire, also predominantly Tory-controlled, there are 66 local authority homes and 233 private homes. In the Isle of Wight there are six local authority homes and 42 private homes. In Wiltshire there are 25 local authority homes and 66 private homes and in Somerset there are 27 local authority homes and 73 private homes.

In a written answer on 28 January the Minister said that the number of registered private residential homes in England for the elderly and disabled in March 1983 were 4,509, in March 1984 5,222, and in March 1985 6,443. That is a provisional figure.

On 12 March the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) initiated a debate on these matters. He made a quite extraordinary claim that the Government have

"an excellent record on extending care in the community."—[*Official Report*, 12 March 1986; Vol. 93, c. 1056.]

The hon. Member cited as evidence the expansion in the national network of private profit-making homes for the old. The hon. Member proceeded to enumerate the many financial problems that inevitably arise from the clash between the desires of the proprietors of these private homes to make profits and the inadequacy of the means of the residents, subsisting, as many do as pensioners, on supplementary benefits.

The Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security the hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) who replied to that debate sought to make the best of a bad job. He welcomed the rapid growth in the private industry but then stated that, in 1978, 7,000 old folks had been helped by supplementary benefit to pay their fees. In other words the Government augmented the profits of the private owners.

In 1978 the cost to the Exchequer was £6 million. The Under-Secretary went on to state that in 1984 the situation had got out of hand and the cost was £190 million. The Government were pouring public money into the coffers of the private owners. The Minister admitted as much. He admitted that the scheme was open to exploitation and abuse.

An article in the journal *Community Care*, on 8 March this year, gave examples and stated:

"According to one estimate, if you get yourself a property and fill it with 12 elderly residents you have a guaranteed income of £60,000 a year."

The same journal referred later to an organisation called

"Care Concern, founded by David Rattray, former deputy director of Denbighshire SSD, whose homes for emotionally disturbed adolescents and the mentally handicapped bring him well over £1 million a year."

When my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham spoke in a debate on these matters on 13 March, she, too, gave examples of what can happen in those private homes. She cited the Inglehurst nursing home in Blackpool, where

"the owners engaged in twice-daily drinking sprees, failed to administer drugs safely and fed their residents inadequately, and where there was inadequate staffing and residents were kept in squalor." — [*Official Report*, 13 March 1986; Vol. 93, c 1149.]

Mainly as a result of my hon. Friend's representations, that home was eventually closed, but not before getting £50,000 a year from the DHSS — in other words, £50,000 of taxpayers' money. My hon. Friend also mentioned two cases of fraud by private homes in Kent. She raised those matters with the Government, but to date, apparently, there has been no action.

In the article in *Community Care* to which I referred, Mr. Dick Clough of the Social Care Association was reported to be worried by the fact that the market in old folks' needs

"is one ripe for profit making".

That view was eagerly shared by a private company called Associated Nursing Services Ltd. It was planning to buy Stewart lodge, belonging to Hammersmith and Fulham council, along with the 29 residents whose average age was 88. Only the imminence of a by-election in that area stopped that.

Incidentally, the proposed sale was to have gone through with the support of the Tory and Liberal councillors in that area, and only in the past few days have those people reneged on that because they saw the great disaster that could befall them politically if they went through with that sale. That was an unbelievable act of social irresponsibility. Only public outrage and the imminence of the by-election stopped it.

Another organisation has shown that it fully understands the enormous profits that can be made out of the old folk. A brochure issued by the Investment and Pensions Advisory Service was quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham in the debate to which I referred. It refers to investment in old folks' homes as a

"lucrative, long-term opportunity for large-scale capital growth."

Under the Government's business expansion scheme, people can get grants of taxpayers' money to engage in that practice. I should be interested to know how much public money has been given out under that scheme to foster that private industry.

The Government have shown clearly that they believe in the private system and in the solution of the problem by private enterprise and privately financed homes; by leaving the problem increasingly to what the Prime Minister describes as caring capitalism, the magic of the market. We should leave it all to the market and the profit motive, and the old people's problems will be solved. There is massive evidence that the Government believe in the increased privatisation of the services, especially the accommodation requirements of our old people.

Handsome profits are being made at the expense of the old, and the taxpayers too, because the Government have admitted that the DHSS — the taxpayers — were paying £10 million a year to private homes in 1979 and £190 million in 1984. God knows what the figure will be now.

The DHSS coughs up as much as £180 per person per week in a private profit-making home. Therefore, a wee 10-bed home can received £1,800 a week or a little less than £100,000 a year of taxpayers' money to look after those people. The local authority is responsible for examination and inspection to see that the homes are up to the mark.

While all that has been going on, the local councils have been directed and bullied into spending less and less on residential care and other services such as home helps, which helps to drive the old folks into the private profit-making sector. It is not many years since Professor Galbraith wrote an eloquent book on that philosophy entitled "Public Squalor and Private Affluence". It is interesting that the Minister grins at that. "Private Affluence and Public Squalor" describes what is happening in this area now. By treating all public expenditure, public investment and public services as inefficient, wasteful and bad, hence justifying the curbing of all that is public, the Government are driving people into the private, profit-making sector, whether it be housing, health, education, pensions, social security or, as in this case, old folk's homes.

The social services as we have known them since the war are being strangled by the Government and the Social Security Bill currently before the House underlines that fact. That is why millions of people up and down the country are full of foreboding for the future of the services as we have known them for the past 40 years.

2.22 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) for raising this subject. I am particularly grateful to him for suggesting that he would like to put some facts and figures on record. We have not had any so far and I should like to offer some.

He talked about the social service being strangled. Never, in real terms, has more been spent on personal social services than is being spent today. He talked about the social security budget being destroyed, or whatever words he used. Never, in real terms, has more been spent. Indeed, there has been an increase of over 20 per cent. in real terms, and most of that has gone on an increased number of beneficiaries, including about 800,000 pensioners and increased rates of benefit paid under the social security system.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central spoke about pensioners. He knows, but perhaps as a member of the Opposition he is not prepared to admit, that the state retirement pension is 10 percentage points higher than it was when we came into office. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman is aware that a pensioner couple on a supplementary pension now receive £2·96 a week more than they would have done when the hon. Gentleman and his party were in government. That is the measure of the so-called stranglehold of personal social services and retirement pensions to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. They are the facts and figures which must be put on record.

The hon. Gentleman is happy that apparently in Scotland his constituents are denied the choice that is

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

available in England between local authority provision, voluntary home provision or private provision. He smiles at that, just as I smiled when he quoted Professor Galbraith. It would be difficult to find anyone more exploded as an economic theorist than Professor Galbraith, other than Mr. Marx, to whom the hon. Gentleman may also pay some tribute.

It may have escaped the hon. Gentleman's notice that most people in this country — including I would imagine, the hon. Gentleman's constituents in Fife, Central — prefer a choice. If they have to go into a home, they prefer an opportunity to choose which sort of home they should go into. The hon. Gentleman seems to object to the fact that the Government are prepared to pay, through supplementary benefit, the scale of fees that are available. For those who live in homes for the elderly, we are prepared to pay £120 a week. For those in nursing homes who are physically disabled and below pensionable age, we are prepared to pay £230 a week.

To the hon. Gentleman that is an outrage. It is something that he condemns. However, the great majority of people, not only the elderly but their relatives, welcome and applaud it. The great majority of people recognise that there has to be a limit. They realise that there has been an explosion in numbers. In 1978, 7,000 people were receiving residential care fees. In 1984, that figure had risen to 42,000. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome that increase in the provision made by the state to a particularly vulnerable section of the community, but he does not. He condemns it.

He does so because so many of these people have the effrontery to seek, in co-operation with the social security budget of the Department of Health and Social Security, entry into private nursing homes. The hon. Gentleman wants them to go into local authority homes. He has picked out some bad private homes. We must continue to seek out the bad private residential homes and nursing homes. That is precisely why an inspection system was introduced two years ago to supervise home care provision and the registration fee system, to which I shall refer in a moment.

Does the hon. Gentleman say that there are no bad local authority homes? Let him discuss that question with his hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman). He should discuss with her what happened in Southwark at the appropriately named Aneurin Bevan home. Let him discuss with her whether those old people would prefer to be in an adequately inspected, properly run voluntary residential or private residential home or nursing home or in a local authority home in Southwark. The hon. Gentleman knows the answer to that question.

The Government recognise the importance of residential care for the elderly. That is why so large a part of our national resources has been devoted to it, why fees have been increased to the levels that I have already mentioned, why we are conducting a study to make sure that fees are kept in line with inflation and why the problems confronting particular categories are examined carefully and kept under careful review.

I have no doubt that the mix that we have achieved, and that we shall continue to maintain and improve, of local authority statutory provision and voluntary and private sector provision is the right way to go. We do not share the hon. Gentleman's vision that that percentage of our community — happily a small percentage — who need residential accommodation should be accommodated willy-nilly, without choice, in local authority homes. Of course there are good local authority homes, and we applaud and support them. But there are also good voluntary and private residential homes. That is a mix, which implies individual choice, freedom and responsibility, that most people welcome.

The hon. Gentleman finds it reprehensible that there were 910 homes in 1979 and that that figure has increased to 1,537 by 1983. I do not find that figure dismaying. I find it something to be pleased about. It means that our elderly population have a greater choice and that the support that the Government are able to offer to them through the social security system, which is constantly kept under review, can be deployed throughout the whole sector of community care.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central has a deep-rooted antagonism to private enterprise and to the operation of the market. I suggest—perhaps I would be wasting my time if I tried to make this suggestion to the hon. Gentleman —that most people consider that, having more homes in the market and more competition, obtaining better value for money, whether private or public, must be in the interests of society and of elderly people. We know that it is a great deal of public money.

Of course, standards must be maintained and that is precisely why we have taken such care in our activities with local authorities in terms of registration and inspection of these homes. Recently, we announced a substantial increase in the registration fee for private homes, from £100 to £500. To put it mildly, that measure was not welcomed by owners of residential homes. We did that because we attached great importance to the proper inspection of these homes to ensure that standards are adequate to meet the needs of our elderly people and to ensure that local authorities do not face additional burdens.

We are proud of our achievements in the promotion and preservation of residential care for the elderly. Happily, only a small minority need this accommodation. The objective must be, as the hon. Gentleman recognised, for the majority of elderly people to stay in their own homes. That is why I am glad that personal social services, the number of home helps and our spending generally on the elderly, including retirement pensioners, are at record levels.

Runaway Children (London)

2.31 pm

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): I appreciate having the opportunity to raise a problem of growing concern throughout the Western world — runaway children. There is no comprehensive policy or practice covering runaway children, but an encouraging project has been set up by the Children's Society to meet this worrying need.

There is evidence that this is a growing problem throughout the Western world. It has been estimated that more than 4,000 young people ran away to London alone last year. In America, the number has reached epidemic proportions, with the federal Government spending $20 million a year dealing with the needs of runaway children and their families. These children are especially vulnerable to crime, either as victims or as perpetrators. They can easily become involved in drugs, vice and prostitution — street crime — and be in great moral danger.

Before I became a Member, I was for many years on the executive of the Children's Society and resigned only when my husband became chairman.

I am pleased that similar rules do not apply in this place to the joint activities of husbands and wives. During the 1970s, there was great concern about the plight of the homeless and the serious lack of housing for young people. The film "Johnny Come Home", which was based on a genuine case, aroused great public anxiety. A number of agencies, such as Alone in London, Centrepoint, and the Soho project, joined to see what they could do. Coinciding with its centenary in 1981, the Children's Society inevitably began to think about its roots and background. It thought that it would be appropriate to devote its energies to the problem of homeless young people.

The Children's Society was founded in 1881 by a young civil servant named Edward Rudolf, who taught at the Sunday school at St. Anne's, Vauxhall, where I used to teach. Mr. Rudolf noticed that two boys who had been regularly attending the Sunday school suddenly went missing. He searched for them and found them begging outside the local gasworks. It transpired that the boys' father had died, leaving the mother with no income and a family to support. She was not prepared to allow the whole family to go into the workhouse, so she decided that the two young boys, aged 10 or 11, should be able to survive for themselves.

When looking for a home for the boys, Edward Rudolf discovered that, unlike the free churches, the established church had no answer to the problem of homeless children or runaways. As a result, a society known as the Waifs and Strays was formed, responding to the needs of thousands of children on the streets of Britain's great cities. In its first annual report, the Children's Society stated that there were an estimated 20,000 homeless children in London alone.

In its attempt to respond to the present day needs of children on the streets following discussions with other interested agencies, and with the assistance of Camden and Westminster social services departments, with the advice and co-operation of the Metropolitan police and with significant resources from the Minister's Department, the Children's Society was able to start the central London teenage project. The project is based in a large terraced house in north London. It has a kitchen, bedrooms for 12, meeting rooms and rooms for private interviews and looks like any other house in the street. Efforts have been made not to publicise the address, so that the young people who come to the house can feel safe from casual visits or intrusions. Young people under the age of 17—19 if in the care of a local authority—who are found homeless on the streets of London are referred to the project by the police, voluntary agencies or the social services departments.

It is not surprising that many of these young people arrive at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. When a new person comes to the house, the staff try to establish trust as the basic requirement for working with the young person. The staff then make contact with the individual's home, but that is only attempted with the young person in attendance, so that he or she knows what is being said.

The staff are clearly in a sensitive position, knowing that they have a duty towards the young person, but, at the same time, if they lose that young person's confidence the young person may well resort to running away again. The young people are given at least 48 hours before their future is decided. During that time, there are negotiations between the project staff, parents, local authorities and other agencies. Parents who wish to contact their children are given free telephone access.

Crucially it is important that help is provided to stop that young person from running away once more. Some young people change their residential setting and others are received into local authority care. In other cases, collaboration, co-operation and essential understanding are attempted between the parents and the child.

Each young person and each family is treated individually so that their solutions are tailored to meet their cases. Above all, the project is followed up with a telephone call to the young person one month later.

On the basis of the 200 young people who have stayed at the centre since it was founded, various findings have emerged. I applaud the way in which the Children's Society has researched the findings of its project. It is only too easy spontaneously to set up an agency to meet a perceived need and then make no rigorous investigation to discover whether it is in fact effectively meeting that need.

The majority of the young people at the centre were between 13 and 16 years of age, although the full age range was between 11 and 21. Of those children, 63 per cent. had run away from home. When exploring the reasons for their running away, breakdown of communications and a lack of understanding between parents and the child were the reasons most frequently given. There appeared to be an inability to discuss problems in the family. Physical and sexual violence were also all too frequently present. It is understandable that child sexual abuse, which has been so powerfully highlighted this week by the NSPCC, is a topic that is particularly difficult for families to deal with, and running away from home can seem to be the solution for the young person involved. Problems of bullying at school and of perceived failure were also mentioned.

Equally worrying, one third of the children had run away from local authority care, which raises questions about the quality of that provision. They mentioned unhappiness, the desire for independence and dislike of the children's home or of the area from which they had come. Bullying by peers was again mentioned. For those children, the solution seemed to be to abandon the home.

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

Forty per cent. of the children came from London and the south-east, the others from all over the country. When asked what help or advantage had been provided, they said that the project had helped them to think and to sort themselves out, perhaps fulfilling the function that grandparents or distant relations can play in less fragmented families. The project highlighted for young people the dangers of trying to survive in London and the staff were seen as trustworthy and available, demonstrating that the project meets an important need at this stage.

A few key issues need to be addressed. The co-operation of the police has clearly been vital in the development of the project. They need to relax their enforcement of the law which obliges them to return children and young people to their parents or guardians. In the review of child care law, some voluntary agencies have argued for special treatment in dealing with the delicate borderland between the child as an independent person and the child as the responsibility of the parents. If the agency enforces return to an unpopular home, the problem may simply recur, but on the second occasion the young person is unlikely to seek help from an agency. That is not to misunderstand the deep unhappiness of parents whose children have gone missing and who desperately want some source of reassurance or certainty as to what has happened to their children.

A further issue focused by the project is the need for centralised reporting of runaways. The Metropolitan police missing persons bureau does valiant work, but many people in the House and elsewhere feel that there should be more rigorous provision for the reporting of missing persons, especially young people. My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) has urged the Government to establish a special unit in the Home Office to pay particular attention to young people who run away.

With regard to the care provided by local authorities, once again the message is that it is essential that young people should be considered and consulted in plans for their future. Too often children feel that the only way to gain any control of their own destiny is to flee. There are messages there for social work training and child care practice generally in making young people feel that they are being consulted, their views heard, and attention paid to their needs.

The contribution and assistance of the Department of Health and Social Security are clearly very important to the project and to similar facilities run by other groups. The recent announcement of the £25,000 grant has made a significant difference. However, I also believe that the proposals in the Budget substantially to improve the tax relief given on charitable donations should dramatically benefit the Children's Society in common with many other charities. Not only are single gifts by companies, up to an amount equal to 3 per cent. of the dividends paid by the company to its shareholders, to be exempt from tax, but payroll giving by individuals is to be encouraged. Employees will be able to give to charities through deductions from wages or salaries.

I hope that, with a greater awareness of the need, individuals and groups throughout the country will take the opportunity to devote resources to a service which, in my view, is fundamentally one that is best met by the voluntary agencies. Ministers are frequently urged in the House to make more local authority provision to meet various needs. I feel that the voluntary agencies have a legitimate and powerful role in pioneering social care and in meeting as yet unrecognised needs. Especially in the case of young people who have frequently been subject to perhaps less than favourable local authority experiences in the past, that seems to me to be an eminently proper and appropriate use of resources.

Finally, apart from leading to more charitable giving and support, I hope that greater awareness of projects such as this will lead to greater sensitivity in the children's home areas. It is important that the signs of unhappiness in children should be recognised, whether at school or at home or through the clergy and all the others in the community who need increasingly to recognise that the solution to the local problems is only rarely to flee. We know only too well from too many cases over the years of the dangers to the young people and the damage that can result—quite apart from the misery suffered by their caretakers—if they choose that way out.

I appreciate having had this opportunity to talk about the central London teenage project, which was developed by the Children's Society at a time when my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) was chairman of the society and which has, I feel, made a particularly important contribution.

2.48 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I am happy to respond to this debate. Yet again, my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) has raised a most important subject. I believe that the matter has never yet been considered in the House. As she said, my hon. Friend has been closely involved for some time with that very important voluntary organisation, the Church of England Children's Society, before the little local difficulty that she encountered because my hon. Friend and her husband the Under-Secretary of State for Transport became chairman. Day by day I learn more about my hon. Friend's deep knowledge and experience in those areas. The revelation that — on top of everything else that she has to offer—she even taught in the same Sunday school as Edward Rudolf adds yet more distinction to her record.

This phenomenon of runaway children in London is a serious one. It is not new. In effect, it has been with us for centuries. We have some figures, although by the nature of the subject they are not reliable. I am advised that in 1985, 2,982 children, of whom 869 were younger than 14 and 2,113 were aged between 14 and 17, were reported to the Metropolitan police to be missing within the Metropolitan police area. At the end of last year, only 146 remained missing. However, every day that a child is lost causes some relative, parent or carer to suffer acute concern. We should not be led wholly astray by some of the more lurid descriptions of what might happen. The dangers of prostitution and entering the drugs scene exist, and we must be alert to them. Many children in those statistics return home in a matter of days. Nevertheless, it is important that appropriate help should be available in London and all our major cities for children who run away or are reported missing.

There is no problem about those who are ready to be found. The police and social services departments of the London boroughs are only too anxious to restore them to

their homes. The police respond immediately to those who are truly missing, and actively use all their resources to find the child. Tragically, some children who disappear are abducted, perhaps seriously assaulted and sometimes killed. Such cases of horror and distress cause us all anxiety.

The police respond in such cases with the greatest commitment. Many children return home late and are unaware of the consequences of that. If a child disappears, it is vital to contact the police as early as possible. They will ensure that everything possible is done with the utmost speed to trace the child. An essential part of that is the need for immediate publicity in those crucial early stages of disappearance. Although the television and radio bring us all problems, they also bring us the benefit of reaching a wide audience. Certainly, they have been used to great advantage, and, obviously, we shall continue to ensure that that is the case.

Voluntary organisations and local authorities, especially in the London area, naturally have an important part to play. Like my hon. Friend I wish to emphasise the great significance of the Church of England Children's Society project — the central London teenage project. As my hon. Friend said, it grew from the concern of voluntary and statutory agencies in the west end about the growing number of under-age young runaways in the west end. It provided a breathing space for a few days for them to talk things over with an understanding and sympathetic worker so that an acceptable resolution of their problem could be found.

Young people relied mainly on the voluntary agencies in the west end for support and help which at that time had neither the legal authority nor the resources to meet the needs of this vulnerable group. That frequently led to young people being sent straight back home and back to precisely the problems from which they had sought to escape, resulting all too often in youngsters running away again and failing to be contacted by the voluntary agencies. That meant that a number of young, vulnerable people were surviving alone in central London, prey to the dangers of street existence, exploitation, crime, prostitution and drugs.

The project aims to assess the needs of young people referred to it by other agencies. Its operation seems to be admirable. I understand that the project provides a safe house and residential provision for young people under the age of 17, or in care up to the age of 19, and that that is an effective contribution to the problem.

As my hon. Friend said, recently we were happily able to provide a capital sum of £50,000 towards the purchase price of the accommodation, and we have given £25,000 towards the running costs in the coming financial year. Certainly, we believe that this is an example of the way in which we can co-operate with the statutory sector on the one hand and the voluntary sector on the other.

I endorse the point my hon. Friend made about the importance of the measures announced by our right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his Budget. Those offer opportunities not only to companies but to individuals for payroll giving. Those measures will take effect from April 1987. I take this opportunity and shall take many others to urge all the charities in the personal social services sector not to hang back but to seize this exciting opportunity that has been provided by the Chancellor. The charities should make sure that the opportunity is used to good effect.

We are looking for a combination of action by central Government — whether through the DHSS or other Government Departments — by local authorities and by voluntary organisations. In many areas, whether in the area of runaway children in London or in any of the other personal social service areas with which my hon. Friend is familiar, it is a combination of action that can provide the best answer. Quite clearly, the state cannot provide all the resources, nor can it provide all the expertise or the insight and the care that are needed. As I have often said in the House, much help can be generated in society and we can mobilise society to help solve these problems. The Church of England teenage project in London that my hon. Friend spoke about is a splendid example of that genre and I commend it as an excellent means of dealing with a special problem.

Mrs. Bottomley: Does my hon. Friend agree that projects of this sort have the added advantage of being organised and funded primarily by voluntary agencies? Many young people who use the project feel somewhat disenchanted with statutory agencies.

Mr. Whitney: I agree with my hon. Friend. That is an important point and of course my hon. Friend is speaking from experience. It contrasts rather interestingly with the last debate during which the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) seemed to think that only the statutory agencies can do good.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): He did not say that.

Mr. Whitney: He seems to believe that. The hon. Gentleman should read his speech. The most effective way is a partnership and the partnership to which my hon. Friend has drawn attention is a splendid example.

Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council

2.58 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I am grateful for the opportunity to say a few words about the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council report, and especially the college education part of it. What I say will almost be the last gasp of the House before the Easter recess, but of course the Minister will have the last gasp. There has already been a debate on the subject in the Scottish Grand Committee, but I am sure the Minister will agree that things have moved on since then, and, as we are almost at the close of submissions in the consultation period, this is an appropriate time for the Minister to comment on the report.

The importance of the issue for the Opposition is examplified by the fact that we have in the House my hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton). They are two of our Front Bench spokesmen in the Scottish team. I am worried about the colleges of education and about recommendations 913 and 914 in the report. I support some of the other recommendations, but we are not dealing with those today.

I cannot understand why the report contains a gratuitous recommendation about the colleges of education. According to the report, it is with some reluctance that its authors make that recommendation. I wish that they had allowed their reluctance to overcome them and not come up with any recommendations. They were not asked to consider making such a recommendation. That was not included specifically in their remit, and the recommendation is somewhat gratuitous.

There have been two reviews of the colleges of education in Scotland within the past decade. There was one in 1977, and a second one in 1980. The uncertainty that has hung over the colleges over the past decade has been unhelpful, and to raise further uncertainty is doubly unhelpful.

Some have suggested that the vice-chairman of STEAC, Mr. Tom Bone, might have influenced the recommendation to which I have referred to safeguard the position of Jordanhill college of education. I hope that that is not the case. I must say, however, that I did wonder where the recommendation had come from and how it had arisen again.

In reality, the substantial question mark that hangs over the colleges should not be there at all. Instead, the question mark should be hanging over the committee's recommendations and its projections of pupil numbers and, secondly, the consequent effect on the number of students and teachers in the colleges.

I received today the Scottish Education Department's statistical bulletin, which contradicts what has been advanced by STEAC. I hope the Minister will confirm that the bulletin shows that in 1984 there were 438,000 primary pupils in Scotland, and projects that in 1987 there will be 334,000. I acknowledge that that is a downturn, but by the end of the century there will be 484,000, on a conservative estimate, if one might use the term.

It is probably safer and more sensible to consider the high variant. It is relatively easy to close colleges of education, but it is difficult to open them or to make available additional places. In considering the high variant, we see that numbers rise steadily until the year 2000, when we shall return to the 1979-80 level. It should be said that the previous review took place after 1979-80.

The SED's statistics contradict those which STEAC has put forward. Equally spectacularly, the General Teaching Council, which is the Secretary of State's adviser on the supply of teachers, disagreed recently with the STEAC report and its recommendations and said that the colleges should remain open. The council is an extremely powerful body. All relevant statistics are available to it and its membership embraces the entire breadth of education knowledge. Represented on it are local authorities, the colleges of education and many other organisations. With no disrespect to STEAC, one or two business men and one or two educationists do not have the same depth of knowledge as the members of the council.

The STEAC report presupposes no improvement in the quality of education, no improvement in the pupil-teacher ratio and no in-service training. I hope that the next Government, who we know will be a Labour Government, will want to see an improvement in the quality of education. That will be difficult to achieve if the colleges of education do not exist. I am arguing that the seven colleges must stay open. If there is a temporary downturn in teacher numbers in the next year or two, that can be accommodated, especially in the larger colleges, by a downturn in the intake. We must take account of the upsurge in demand that will take place in the ensuing years.

I wish to concentrate my remarks on the Craigie college of education, which is in the constituency of the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), the Secretary of State for Defence. The college serves the whole of Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway and is our community college. I do not concentrate on Craigie because I have no concern for the other colleges. Indeed, I have concern for them all, and some of the arguments that can be advanced in support of the other six colleges are those that apply to Craigie. I shall concentrate on Craigie because I know it well and because there are six arguments which relate to it and which the representatives of Craigie advanced forcefully to the Minister. I am sure the Minister will agree that they produced an excellent and forceful submission.

The first is a geographical argument which applies equally to a number of the other colleges, particularly Aberdeen. There is a concentration of teacher education in Scotland. It is becoming highly centralised compared with England and Wales, and the Craigie submission has a map to show that. Craigie serves Dumfries and Galloway and Strathclyde, along with Jordanhill and St. Andrew's colleges. Those two regions have a population equivalent to Wales. But whereas Wales has 11 institutions with pre-service training spread throughout the country, west Scotland, equivalent in size and population, has only three. If the recommendations went ahead, there could be more centralisation in Scotland.

I today received a letter from the Minister, answering some points that I had raised, in which he says that if any of the closures go ahead, outstations could be provided.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): The Minister has said that before.

Mr. Foulkes: Exactly. My hon. Friend used to teach at Hamilton, and he knows only too well. The evidence

of Craiglockhart, Hamilton and Callendar Park is not encouraging. Outstation provision remains in only two, and it is in one or two rented classrooms, with only a handful of staff.

A local college knows the schools, and the schools know the college. The link between the school and college is important. The majority of the output of Craigie college finds employment in south-west Scotland. The Craigie product has a high reputation. STEAC mentions the importance of continuing education, and that would be helped by having a college, not an outstation, with all the range of expertise, support and advice that only a college can offer.

The second argument in favour of Craigie is its good employment record. That is not easy in these days of high unemployment, as the Minister knows. The Craigie product is known in the south-west of Scotland as being of a high standard. In January 1984, 82 per cent. of the output was employed, compared with between 16 and 46 per cent. in other colleges. In January 1985 it was 73 per cent., and in January 1986 it was up to 92 per cent. Craigie-trained teachers are a high quality product.

The third argument, which is one which I do not advance, but it has been put forward by STEAC, the Public Accounts Committee and others, relates to cost-effectiveness and efficiency. I am not sure that it is the most important argument, but as it has been argued I shall counter it. The cost per student at Craigie is the lowest of all—£3,421 per student, as we see from page 153 of the report. If Craigie were to be closed—I am not saying that the Minister would contemplate it—students would have to go to Glasgow to be trained and there would be the extra cost of travel from Stranraer, Dumfries and Ayrshire up to Glasgow. There would also be the problem of the extra cost of accommodation in Glasgow, which, as my hon. Friends know, is already greatly strained, as Glasgow has two universities and other colleges.

Fourthly, nothing could provide a stronger case than the efficient use of accommodation in Craigie. Half of Craigie college is used by 400 students from Ayr college—formerly Ayr technical college. Out of the total complement of 800 students at Craigie, that leaves, as even the Minister will be able to work out, 400. The teacher training complement is currently 340, and with the daily community use that brings Craigie up to 800 people regularly using that college—up to its complement—so there is no question that Craigie is not being used to capacity.

The fifth argument is service to the community. The other day the whole theatre at Craigie college was packed with people from all parties, including the Minister's, and all walks of life supporting the college and what it does for the community. People from the Open University, the social work department and community education all said how useful Craigie is to the community.

I am grateful to the Minister for replying to a question today and for mentioning all the representations that he has received. Many of them come from Ayrshire, including from the presbytery there. Robert Burns would not dare to stand against the recommendations of the presbytery of Ayr, and the presbytery of Ayr unanimously supports the retention of Craigie college.

The final argument concerns the partnership between college and university, which STEAC also says is important. For the past 40 years Craigie college has had a superb partnership with the University of Strathclyde. It is significant that the principal and academic board of Strathclyde university have praised Craigie, and have made submissions to the Minister to ignore the STEAC recommendations and keep Craigie serving the west of Scotland.

Those are the specific arguments for Craigie, and many of them apply equally to the other colleges. I am in favour of all seven staying open. But if one final argument was needed to convince the Minister and the Secretary of State about the foolishness of closing any college, it would be that they should look at those which have already been closed by the Minister or his predecessor. In a written answer to me on 3 February the Minister confirmed—*[Interruption.]* I must say, I do not like that barracking from my own Front Bench.

In a written answer to me on 3 February the Minister confirmed that there are still no firm proposals for the long-term use of Callendar Park college of education, which was closed about five years ago. No revenue at all has accrued to the Government from that. Moreover, we all recall the scandal of the sale of the Hamilton college buildings at a knockdown price by the Minister's predecessor, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher). They were sold to a somewhat dubious character who is also involved in a pretty sinister campaign for law and order, with which the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) is connected. To sell Hamilton college to a sort of Mary Whitehouse in trousers was not a sensible step. I hope that the Minister will get his inspectors to look at what is going on in that private institution. It would bear very careful scrutiny.

It is much better to keep the colleges, which are a vital part of Scottish education, serving their communities in the variety of ways that I have outlined. During the next few weeks the Minister and the Secretary of State will have to take account of the various recommendations. The Minister said that one or two supported the STEAC recommendations. I cannot think who they are. I suppose that one might be Jordanhill college, but there cannot be many of them. I see that the Minister is nodding, so that must be the only one.

Educational and community interests, as well as many other people, are overwhelmingly against the closure of any of the seven colleges. I think that I speak on behalf of all Members of Parliament for the south-west of Scotland, and on behalf of councillors and the community as a whole, when I say that there will be a monumental outcry if Craigie is not kept open. Surely the Minister and even this Government believe that Scottish education is a vital part of Scottish life.

3.13 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on raising this important matter in such a timely fashion, as we are just coming to the end of the consultation period. He has given the Minister fair notice that it is an anxious issue, which is likely to arouse strong feelings before it runs its course. It is, therefore, important that we should have a chance to consider it, albeit briefly today.

It is an anxious issue because an aura of uncertainty has surrounded the colleges of education for a long time. The Minister will be aware that during the past decade the student population has fallen by about 53 per cent., which

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

represents a substantial drop. There has been a rather sad record of closures. The history of Hamilton and Callendar Park underlines some of the difficulties that can arise.

I have considerable admiration for the work put in by Donald MacCallum and his colleagues on the STEAC report. It is on the whole a lively and largely optimistic report. The last passages on the colleges of education were sparingly phrased and skeletal in their arguments. The conclusion was not buttressed by substantial argument. I found that part of the report unconvincing.

Paragraph 5.39 of the report contained the key factor on which the committee based its recommendations. The assumption was that there would be a peak in the number of students in pre-service training of about 5,000. Everyone who has looked even casually at the arguments will know that the Scottish Education Department has taken a more optimistic view of the number of places which are likely to be needed. In 1984-85, the estimate was 5,250, but the estimate for 1985-86 was 7,380. That figure came out in evidence to the Public Accounts Committee.

In the same period, the number of places for primary school training, which is particularly important to Craigie, the esimated rise was from 1,780 to 3,500. That underlines what we already suspected—that the statistical base on which the recommendation was made is not made out. That is the kindest way of putting it.

The Minister suggested at Scottish Question Time yesterday that the report was well considered. I do not dissent from that as a generalisation, but, on the face of it, that cannot be applied to the particular passage to which I referred.

We must also take into account the need for growth in in-service training. The SED predicted a small decrease in the number of other users of colleges which I do not accept. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley that to talk, for example, of the development of outstations is not entirely satisfactory. I thought that outstations had something to do with sheep-rearing in Western Australia. It is not a satisfactory answer in terms of being a substitute for the in-depth service that a college of education can give to a community.

I recognise the need for up-to-date information. The Public Accounts Committee said that forcefully. The Minister talked about the computerised analysis of available accommodation and course requirements. Somebody is obviously trying to make him literate, since they cannot make him numerate. I hope that the Minister will take seriously the view that the case for closure has not been made out. Much depends upon what is fed into a computer and who assesses the results. We are anxious that not too much weight is given to Treasury evidence but that proper weight is given to education priorities when reaching a final decision.

We do not deny the case for rationalisation. There will be changes in staff-pupil ratios. There may be a case for a more efficient use of resources and courses. I hope that the case for further closures will not be accepted when there is no substantial argument for making those closures.

We must put an end to the uncertainty, but we do not want to be rushed into a narrow, book-keeping approach to the exercise when so much is at stake.

3.19 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): I congratulate the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on his success in securing this debate on the report of the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council and its implications for Scottish colleges of education. As the hon. Member recognised, in one sense the debate is peculiarly timely because it is the last official day for comments to be submitted on the STEAC report.

On the other hand it is untimely for me and for Opposition Members, as it is extremely difficult for me to comment. We cannot take any decisions on the report until we have fully analysed the representations received. However, I congratulate the hon. Member on putting forward his case, particularly his case for Craigie college. It is unfortunate that he spoilt the objective tenor of his remarks by his wholly unjustified remarks about my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher).

I remind the House of the policy which was confirmed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland during the debate on STEAC in the Scottish Grand Committee in Edinburgh in January. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley also referred to that debate. My right hon. and learned Friend said that the consultation period would continue until Easter and that no decisions would be taken until views had been received during that period. We have received a large number of views. We have received a petition from the Scottish members of the National Union of Students. The first signature on the petition was that of the leader of the Opposition. No doubt the House will wish him well in his studies as a Scottish undergraduate.

We are not rigid about the closing date for representations. I recognise there may be some comments that will be received during the Easter period. We have received about a hundred representations and indeed, at the rate at which comments have been received—I have not yet checked on this morning's post — we shall receive well over a hundred specifically about the colleges of education. However, the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and the Doon Valley will recognise that my answer concerns the most up-to-date information. I will of course report to the House on the decisions taken in relation to STEAC.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way, as I am aware I have taken up much of the time of the debate. He has confirmed the information in his original written answer but will he bring it up to date and confirm to the House that the vast majority of representations in relation to the recommendation of STEAC on colleges of education are against its recommendations and in favour of keeping all seven colleges open?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Member will recognise that there are 23 recommendations in the STEAC report. Some of them are important and are widely accepted. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and the Doon Valley will recognise that the report, in general, has been well received. I confirm to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and the Doon Valley that it is true that the majority of the representations we have received in

relation to the recommendations on the colleges of education have been opposed to the STEAC recommendations.

STEAC recommended that steps should be taken to reduce the number of colleges of education to three non-denominational institutes plus one Roman Catholic college. Hon. Members who represent the official Opposition have given us their views on that. The Liberals and the Social Democratic party did not express their views yesterday and are not present today. It would be helpful if I told the House I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North East (Mr. Henderson) for informing me that at the Educational Institute of Scotland council the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) confirmed the alliance view that the majority of Scottish colleges of education should be retained. Perhaps I should add that at least for the Conservative party and doubtless for the Labour party, if not the Liberals, four out of seven constitutes a majority.

I cannot confirm when decisions will be taken on the recommendations until we have considered the various representations received.

I must say to Opposition members that we are not committed to responding to all the recommendations at the same time because many of the recommendations of the STEAC report are not controversial. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and the Doon Valley listed a number of questions about the future of colleges of education and particularly Craigie college. It was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame North (Mr. Corrie) during Scottish questions yesterday, and it is, of course, in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. I confirm to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley that, in considering Craigie, as with the other colleges, we shall take into account all the relevant factors and ensure that decisions are appropriate on educational grounds, which was the point made by the hon. Member for Garscadden, as well as cost-effective.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley emphasised most the point about numbers and surplus capacity. It is common ground that there is surplus capacity. In its report, STEAC said in paragraph 5.34:

"While we accept that there will be a growth in numbers in primary schools at least and that some reversal of the trend in student numbers in the colleges of education during the next decade will be required, we do not foresee the stage being reached again when all seven colleges of education will be filled to capacity with trainee teachers, teachers on in-service courses and students on other non-teacher-training courses."

Equally, it is recognised that some of the capacity figures that have been quoted in the past, and to which the hon. Gentleman referred, are less sophisticated than we would wish. I accept the general point that both hon. Members made that, in taking decisions on the need to effect rationalisation, it is important that we have information available to us that relates actual accommodation to the particular requirements of the current range of courses offered by the colleges. For that reason, my Department, in conjunction with the colleges is carrying out a computerised analysis of available accommodation and course requirements. The hon. Member for Garscadden referred to that.

Let me expand on that point. Over the past two months or so, my Department has met each of the colleges to discuss initial computer prints showing accommodation usage. The initial prints are a working tool only, but in the light of comments made they will be amended to show as realistically as possible the position in each college. The computer model will allow us to test the effect of future population changes. The results of that exercise will be available to inform our decisions on the STEAC report.

I agree with both hon. Members that it is important that decisions are reached on sensible educational grounds. STEAC took the view that there should be rationalisation of courses of secondary teacher training to avoid small numbers of students being spread too thinly over a wide range of specialist subjects. I confirm to the House that, pending the outcome of consultations on STEAC, it would be premature to contemplate radical changes. Therefore, rationalisation in connection with intakes for the session 1986-87 is being carried out without prejudice to the longer-term position.

Mr. Foulkes: The Minister referred to the computerised analysis of availability of accommodation and course requirements, but that does not take account of geographical factors. Scotland represents one third of the land area of the United Kingdom. I hope that at least if the computer does not take account of that, the Minister will.

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman took the very words out of my mouth. I was about to say that the up-to-date information on capacity and on the projections of student numbers is vital. I can confirm to the hon. Gentleman that the Government will of course take fully into account geographical and other factors, and the importance of in-service training to which both hon. Members referred.

No doubt the House or perhaps the Scottish Grand Committee will return to the subject when the Government have reached their decisions. For the moment, I confirm to the House that I shall study carefully and in detail the points that both hon. Members put to me during the debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Three o'clock pursuant to resolution of the House [25 March].

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 17 March 1986

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Kurds

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what representations he has received about human rights in Iran and Iraq with particular reference to people in Kurdistan;

(2) what representations have been made to the Governments of *(a)* Iran and *(b)* Iraq about human rights in Kurdistan and about the treatment of Kurds.

Mr. Eggar: We are always concerned about allegations of human rights violations, including against minority groups, wherever they occur. We have received a number of representations from Amnesty International, and from individuals, about incidents in Kurdistan. We take every suitable opportunity to raise human rights matters with both Governments.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received from the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees about the standards of life of occupants of refugee camps for Kurdish people in Iran and Iraq.

Mr. Eggar: None.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Lindop Report

Mr. Norris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the Government have reached a decision on the recommendations of the Lindop report on academic validation of public sector higher education; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: When the report of the Lindop committee of inquiry was published in April 1985 the Government invited comments on its recommendations. The Government have now considered these recommendations in the light of comments received and have reached the following main conclusions.

The Government share the committee's view that the most effective safeguard of an institution's academic standards is the existence within it of a strong, cohesive and self-critical academic community. In future, the main purpose of external validating arrangements must be to foster the development of such communities.

The Government are not persuaded at present that to achieve their main purpose of maintaining and improving standards, certain polytechnics or colleges need to be granted full autonomy in validation with powers to award their own degrees, as the committee proposed in its option 3. Instead, the Government welcome the changes that the Council for National Academic Awards is now making in response to the work of the Lindop committee—along the lines of the committee's option 1. Institutions will be able to seek substantially greater responsibility for validation and review of their courses and, subject to amendment of the CNAA's charter, authority in certain cases to award degrees in their own names. The Government also welcome parallel proposals in respect of external validation by universities. The Government will watch how these developments progress before coming to a final decision on option 3.

Existing arrangements for validation have, rightly, been criticised for their bureaucracy and excessive reliance on course documentation and for insufficient attention to course delivery and outcomes. The Government welcome the CNAA's commitment to the simplification of its procedures and look to the council to modify its approach generally to meet such criticisms. They also expect institutions to co-operate fully in the adoption of a new approach to validation. Progress in this area on the part of both CNAA and institutions will bear on the Government's final decision on option 3. The Government do not anticipate that the new arrangements will on balance increase local authority expenditure and they could indeed permit some reduction.

A copy of a paper setting out in greater detail the Government's response to the Lindop report has today been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications were received in 1984 and 1985, respectively, from United Kingdom non-governmental organisations for 100 per cent. project support through the joint funding scheme for population and family planning projects; if he will specify each application received from each organisation showing if the application was refused; and if he will set out the reasons for refusal in each case.

Mr. Raison: The following applications were received in 1985 (none were received in 1984):

Agency	*Project*	*Outcome*
Population Services	Pilot project to promote family planning among the lower income workers and rural workers in Leon, Mexico	Accepted
Population Services	Integrated mother and child health and information education and training programme for Association of Women's Clubs in Zimbabwe	Refused—the design of the project was considered to be inappropriate to the family planning needs of Zimbabwe
Population Services	Youth fertility education programme, Sierra Leone	Accepted
Population Concern	Expansion of family planning services to the Terai region and Banke district of Nepal	Refused—the design of the project was considered to be inappropriate to the family planning needs of Nepal
Population Concern	Family welfare workers, training programme, Karachi, Pakistan	Under consideration—the grant has been sought for financial year 1986-87
Population Concern	Outreach family planning services, Kenya	Under consideration—the grant has been sought for financial year 1986-87

In addition a further four projects were funded in 1984 and 1985 although the applications for the grants were received in previous years.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Student Grants

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the number of undergraduate students in receipt of a local education authority maintenance grant *(a)* who have made an additional claim for travelling expenses and *(b)* who have received payment as a result of such a claim (i) in England and Wales and (ii) in Newcastle upon Tyne, in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Mr. Walden: Of the 178,377 mandatory award holders in England and Wales reimbursed for excess expenses incurred in respect of travel in 1983-84, 1,063 were from Newcastle upon Tyne. Figures for England and Wales are not yet available for 1984-85, but 44 award holders from Newcastle upon Tyne were reimbursed for excess travel expenses in that year. The Department does not collect separate figures in respect of claims and of reimbursements.

Teacher Training Institutions

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teacher training institutions have been closed down since 1981; and on how many of these there have been consultations with the National Advisory Body.

Mr. Walden: Intakes to courses of initial teacher training have ceased at 10 institutions since 1981. One of the 10 institutions has now closed. The National Advisory Body was given the opportunity to comment on those institutions which were within its area of responsibility at the time.

Physics Posts

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many physics posts are currently estimated to be vacant in secondary schools; and what proportion of these are in secondary schools in the Wolverhampton education authority area.

Mr. Chris Patten: Based on incomplete returns for January 1986 from local education authorities, it is estimated that there were about 140 unfilled vacancies for posts in maintained secondary schools in England for which physics was the main teaching subject required. Two vacancies in that subject were reported by Wolverhampton local education authority.

Teachers Superannuation Scheme

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to amend the teachers' superannuation scheme to provide for equality of benefits and contributions for male and female teachers, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Men and women pay the same rate of contributions to the teachers' superannuation scheme and are treated in the same way with regard to benefits apart from those payable in the event of death. Although a death gratuity is payable in respect of all teachers, family benefits, subject to the completion of a minimum qualifying period, are payable automatically only on the death of a male teacher. Widowers' pensions are payable only if the teacher has earlier nominated her husband as being wholly or mainly dependent on her. My right hon. Friend accepts that there are strong arguments for equality of treatment in this as in all other features of the scheme, but there are cost implications.

The subject has been discussed in the teachers' superannuation working party, on which both teachers and the local authorities are represented. At the last meeting on 9 December 1985, the teachers' panel was informed that as a way forward my right hon. Friend was prepared to invite the Government Actuary to take automatic widowers' benefits into account when he calculates the contributions required at the next quinquennial review. I understand that the teachers' panel is currently considering this offer.

Music Teaching

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy towards the nature, scope and objectives of music teaching in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary education; what representations he has received about the level of resources available for music teaching in schools; if he has any plans to make additional resources available for this purpose; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government believe that all pupils in our schools can derive fulfilment and enjoyment from the study and practice of music. Music education in both primary and secondary schools should provide first-hand musical experiences which challenge and absorb pupils across the whole range of musical ability, and give them all the opportunity to show what they know, understand and can do. It should also foster the development of those pupils who display particular musical talent. The discussion document "Music from 5 to 16", published by Her Majesty's inspectorate last year in its "Curriculum Matters" series, examined in detail the nature, scope and objectives of a music education based on these principles. Comments on that document are still being received.

My right hon. Friend has received representations from time to time both about the general quality of music education in schools and from individual parents about the provision available for their children. We believe that the level of funding should be adequate to give music a worthwhile place in both the primary and secondary curriculum. However, as I stated in my reply to the hon. Member on 13 November at column 175, responsibility for determining from within the resources available to them how much should be provided for music education in maintained schools rests with the local education authorities and schools themselves. My right hon. Friend has no present plans to make available additional resources specifically for music teaching in maintained schools, but the Government are currently providing aided places for over 300 gifted young musicians at four specialist music schools participating in the music and ballet scheme.

Burnham Committee

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will next review the representation on the teachers' panel of the Burnham primary and secondary committee.

Sir Keith Joseph: I do not think that it would be appropriate to consider holding such a review until the independent panel recently appointed by ACAS to assist management and teachers in negotiations on various matters, including procedures for negotiation, has completed its work. In the meantime I will continue to keep changes in membership of the teacher unions under careful observation.

Hearing-impaired Children

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what proportion of hearing-impaired children in *(a)* special schools and *(b)* hearing-impaired units continue with further education after the age of 16 years; and if he will give what information he has regarding the percentages taking up the various types of further education;

(2) how many local education authorities are charging the parents of hearing-impaired young people for board and lodging costs incurred because the young people have to stay away from home, because there are no suitable courses with support facilities locally;

(3) how many hearing-impaired young people are on further education courses; how many of these are on specialist residential courses; and what proportion are being charged for some or all of their board and lodging costs by the local education authority.

Mr. Chris Patten: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will request local education authorities to provide him with information on the extent and nature of the provision that is made to meet the special needs of hearing-impaired students at the further education colleges for which they are responsible;

(2) if he will take steps to maintain a central list of colleges and universities which make special provision for the particular needs of hearing-impaired students, including information on the availability of (i) radio hearing aids, (ii) note takers, (iii) additional tutorials, (iv) help with language from a teacher of the deaf, (v) full or part-time educational interpreting into sign language and (vi) courses especially for hearing-impaired students.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Department has commissioned a survey of the provision being made on 1 November 1985 for students with special educational needs in all maintained, assisted and grant-aided institutions of further and higher education. The survey report will offer a summary on a national basis of information about provision for the hearing-impaired under the headings suggested by the right hon. Member and I shall send him a copy when the report is available later in the year. The Department does not require for its own purposes to hold a record of information relating to individual colleges but such information should be obtainable from individual local education authorities. So far as the universities are concerned, I would refer the right hon. Member to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science on 13 March at column 539.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about charging the parents of hearing-impaired children aged over 16 years for board and lodgings costs which arise because no appropriate further education opportunities are available within the county boundaries, and the children have to continue their education elsewhere; and what replies he has given.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend is currently considering complaints on this subject from the parents of six young people over the age of 16 with hearing impairment. Each case of this kind has to be considered individually in consultation with the authority concerned and my right hon. Friend, though he is aware of the need to resolve such cases as quickly as possible, is not yet in a position to offer replies to the parents.

National Deaf Children's Society (Appeal)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to reply to the appeal under section 68 of the Education Act 1944 made by the National Deaf Children's Society in July 1985.

Mr. Chris Patten: The National Deaf Children's Society wrote in support of three of the young people referred to in my earlier reply today to the right hon. Member. The Department's interim response on behalf of my right hon. Friend indicated that the eventual reply would in part depend upon the outcome of his consideration of the individual complaints. A reply will be sent as soon as possible.

"School Attendance and the Education Welfare Services"

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if the Scottish Federation of Education Welfare Officers was invited to make a submission prior to the issue of his Department's draft circular "School Attendance and the Education Welfare Services"; and what representations it made to him on the matter.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Department's consultations were restricted to the relevant English associations, since the circular does not apply to Scotland.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Visual Display Units

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visual display units are in use by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the Metropolitan police; and how many of these are Tempest-shielded.

Mr. Hurd: There are about 1,000 visual display units in use in my Department at present. Precise figures for my Department and figures for the Metropolitan police can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

It is not the practice to make public details of security arrangements and I am not able to say what number of visual display units may be Tempest-shielded.

Prison Officers Association

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the General Secretary of the Prison Officers' Association; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend last met Mr. Evans, along with other trade union representatives, on 3 March to discuss the current review of prison industries.

Castington Young Offenders Institution (Overtime)

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what change he has made in the 1986-87 overtime budget for the Castington young offenders institution.

Mr. Mellor: The overtime budget for 1985-86 is £526,864. The 1986-87 overtime budget has been set at £515,612, reflecting the closer match between the authorised complement and the number of staff in post at Castington than obtains on average across the region.

Law and Order (Expenditure)

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total of public expenditure on law and order in 1979 and 1985, respectively, as expressed in 1980 prices; and using the same base year, what is the estimated expenditure for each of the next three years.

Mr. Hurd: On the basis of 1980-81 prices, expenditure on law and order services in England and Wales was £2,473 million in 1979-80 and is estimated to be £3,258 million in 1985-86. Using the same basis of 1980-81 prices, planned expenditure for 1986-87 is £3,287 million. No decision has been taken on provision for 1987-88 and 1988-89. The cash figures provisionally included for those years in the Government's expenditure plans 1986-87 to 1988-89 will be reconsidered in this year's public expenditure survey in the light of local authority budgets for 1986-87 and other factors.

Data Protection Act 1984

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many businesses have registered under the Data Protection Act 1984 to date; and how many have yet to register.

Mr. Waddington: About 13,000 applications for registration have been received by the Data Protection Registrar. He estimates that about 300,000 data users and computer bureaux may be liable to register.

EC (Television Programmes)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the proposals from the Common Market Commission on the content of television programmes in EEC countries; and if he will explain the extent to which his Under-Secretary of State, Lord Glenarthur, has been involved in discussions on these issues with the Commission.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that the Commission is preparing a draft directive arising out of the proposals in its Green Paper on broadcasting of June 1984, but that no final decisions have yet been taken on its content. As indicated in paragraph 92 of the recent report from the House of Lords' Select Committee on the European Communities (HL43), it is believed that the Commission has been considering the possibility of quotas on certain types of programming. My right hon. Friend and I discussed the Green Paper proposals with the Commissioner responsible, Lord Cockfield, at a meeting on 14 February at which my noble Friend, the Under-Secretary of State, was also present.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the proposed directives on the content of television programmes in EEC countries will fall to be considered within the procedures which permit majority voting in the Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: It will be for the European Commission, in proposing a draft directive, to indicate the powers under which it might be made; and subsequently for the Council to decide which articles of the treaty would be appropriate.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why the EEC Commission wishes to restrict United States television programmes and substitute programmes from EEC countries.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I cannot answer for the Commission.

Prison Statistics

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have served prison sentences of less than one week at Winson Green prison, Birmingham, since 1 September 1985.

Mr. Mellor: According to the records held centrally, about 30 persons were initially received into Birmingham prison in the period 1 September 1985 to 31 January 1986 to serve sentences of less than one week.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is yet in a position to say how many staff in his Department will be working wholly or partly on functions arising out of the Local Government Act 1985 and the implementation of the abolition of the metropolitan county councils and the Greater London council during the financial year 1986-87; what are the estimated costs for 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: It is still too soon to estimate staff time and costs in 1986-87.

Juries (Defendants' Antecedents)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to ensure that juries are advised of an accused person's previous convictions before they come to a verdict on all prosecutions involving allegations of violence and disorder; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We are looking further at current law and practice in the light of the case which my hon. Friend no doubt has in mind.

Illegal Immigration

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy in relation to the circumstances in which he orders the removal of people whose entry to the United Kingdom was subject to immigration control, who have been in the United Kingdom for 10 years or more but whose residence during that period has been lawful.

Mr. Waddington: Continuous lawful residence in the United Kingdom of 10 years or more is considered a prima facie reason for allowing a person to remain even though he or she does not qualify to do so under the general provisions of the immigration rules. However, each case is considered on its merits taking into account any countervailing factors such as a criminal record.

In considering possible deportation, my right hon. Friend has regard to the matters set out in paragraphs 156-159 of the immigration rules (HC 169).

Prisoners (Movements)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why the following prisoners have been moved *(a)* Joseph O'Connell from Parkhurst to Leicester, *(b)* Tommy Quigley from Wormwood Scrubs to Albany, *(c)* John McComb from Parkhurst to Long Lartin and *(d)* Eddie Butler from Leicester to Parkhurst.

Mr. Mellor: Mr. O'Connell, Mr. McComb and Mr. Butler were transferred for operational reasons. Mr. Quigley was returned to Albany from Wormwood Scrubs having been transferred temporarily in the interests of good order and discipline at Albany.

M1 (Policing)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the appropriate chief officer of police as to the level of policing of the M1 prior to the M25 exit generally and at peak times, and as to any changes in the level of policing planned at peak times in response to recent levels of congestion; and if he will make a statement on the substance of the report.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The policing of this section of the M1 is a matter for the chief constable of Hertfordshire. He has informed me that two patrol cars are allocated to the area, and additional resources are made available when necessary. It is expected that the current congestion problem will be considerably eased when the final section of the M25 is opened at the end of this year.

Entry Refusals

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were refused leave to enter the United Kingdom during 1985; and how many of those people originated from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan.

Mr. Waddington: The available information relates to those removed from the United Kingdom after being refused entry, who numbered 18,505 in 1985; of these, 10,334 were nationals of countries of the New Commonwealth or of Pakistan.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Islington, North of 16 January, *Official Report*, columns *623-5* concerning arrivals from Bangladesh, how many of those refused entry were *(a)* subsequently given temporary admission, *(b)* returned to Bangladesh and *(c)* returned to a third country;

(2) pursuant to his reply of 16 January, *Official Report*, columns *623-4*, concerning persons denied entry, how many of those refused entry were *(a)* subsequently given temporary admission, *(b)* returned to their country of origin and *(c)* returned to a third country.

Mr. Waddington: I will reply as soon as possible.

Metropolitan Police (Complaints)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints have been received from persons in respect of officers in the N division of the Metropolitan police for each month since June 1983; how many of the investigations have been completed; how many were found in favour of the complaint; how many have resulted in compensation; how much has been paid in compensation; and how many are still unresolved.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information requested is not readily available and I will reply as soon as possible giving such information as can be obtained without undue expense.

Police (Firearms)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions since January 1984 firearms have been used *(a)* by police and *(b)* others in the N district of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Figures provided by the Commissioner are as follows:

Number of police operations in N district in which a police officer fired a weapon with which he had been issued:

1984	Nil
1985	1

Figures for incidents in N district in which firearms were used by persons other than police are not immediately available, and I will write to the hon. Member.

Stop and Search

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were stopped and searched in each month since January 1984 and subsequently *(a)* charged and *(b)* not charged for each of the sub-divisions of N district of the Metropolitan police area.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I will reply as soon as possible.

Metropolitan Police (N District)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, by incident, the number of persons in the N district area of the Metropolitan police who have been charged with conspiracy to pervert the course of justice and subsequently had the charge withdrawn.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that this information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what occasions CS gas containers, riot shields or water cannons have been issued to N district of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner that no CS gas containers or water cannon have been issued to N district. All districts in the Metropolitan police hold a small number of riot shields.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions since January 1984 police have been brought into N district from other divisions.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Between 1 January 1984 and 13 March this year, officers from other districts were deployed on N district on 72 occasions.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of occasions that firearms have been issued to police in N division by month since January 1984.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The available records show the number of police operations in which firearms were issued, rather than the number of separate occasions; and they are maintained on an annual basis and could not, without disproportionate expense, be shown on a monthly basis. The available information, provided by the Commissioner, is as follows:—

Police operations in N district in which firearms wre issued:—

1984	39
1985	32

Sri Lankan Nationals (Visa Requirement)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now remove the visa requirements for entry to the United Kingdom for Sri Lankan nationals.

Mr. Waddington: No.

News International Plant, Wapping (Meeting)

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the circumstances in which, on the evening of 12 March, a lorry at Wapping drove through a line of police into a meeting being held there by the hon. Member for Newham, North-East, the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney, (Mr. Shore), the hon. Members for Easington (Mr. Dormand) and for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott); what action the police are taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I regret that in this incident two demonstrators and two police officers suffered minor injuries. I am advised by the Commissioner that the police are investigating the incident, and have questioned the lorry driver concerned. No decision has yet been made on whether any charges should be brought.

Security (Grants)

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether there are any plans to introduce a system of grants to assist occupiers in areas of high crime to improve the security of their premises.

Mr. Giles Shaw: There are a number of local schemes run, for example, by local authorities or crime prevention panels, for supplying security devices free or at very low cost to those most in need, particularly the elderly. Central Government funds provided through the urban programme and the community programme may also be used in schemes to help make homes more secure. These seem the best ways of directing resources where the need is exceptional. It would be wrong to suggest that the state should take over from householders responsibility for looking after their homes.

Inner-City Crime

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department has any plans to carry out studies of crime levels in the inner city.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Police forces regularly collate, and publish in the chief constable's annual report, information on notifiable offences recorded in their police force area. Summary national figures are also published regularly (for example in "Notifiable Offences Recorded by the Police in England and Wales, 1985", Home Office Statistical Bulletin 4/86, published 13 March). Some information on inner-city crime can also be drawn from the British crime survey (see for example Home Office research studies Nos. 81 and 85.)

Emergency Headquarters, Dover

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *486*, what was the level of cost quoted for the refurbishment of the former sub-region emergency headquarters at Dover.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The cost of refurbishing this communication centre was estimated to be £500,000.

Civil Defence

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether in the arrangements for civil defence, sites have yet been selected for zone headquarters numbers 6.1, 8.1 and 10.1.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Sites have been selected for regional government headquarters 6.1 and 8.1 but not 10.1.

Iraqi and Iranian Nationals

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people from *(a)* Iraq and *(b)* Iran are currently in the United Kingdom, broken down into (i) refugees, (ii) asylum seekers and (iii) students.

Mr. Waddington: This information is not available. Statistics of those seeking asylum show that between 1979 and 1985 380 Iraqi nationals were granted asylum (with or without refugee status), and 300 were given leave to enter or remain on an exceptional basis following the refusal of asylum. During the same period, 4,630 Iranian nationals were granted asylum, and 2,040 were given exceptional leave. At 31 December 1985 there were about 400 applications for refugee status outstanding from Iraqis and about 1,500 from Iranians.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many Iraqi nationals who arrived in

the United Kingdom via Iran have had their asylum application refused and are currently on temporary admission;

(2) how many persons from *(a)* Iran and *(b)* Iraq have been refused asylum and are currently in the United Kingdom on temporary admission.

Mr. Waddington: I regret that information in the form requested could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

Rape Victims (Anonymity)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to introduce legislation to protect the anonymity of victims of rape or attempted rape prior to charges being formally brought; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend is considering urgently whether, without making it harder to catch the offender, it would be possible to bring forward the time at which the anonymity of a victim of rape is protected by law.

Police (Assault)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and the chief constable of the West Midlands police as to the number of summonses which have been issued against officers of their forces for alleged assault on private citizens and the number of cases in which each force has been required to pay compensation to the plaintiff.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 February, c. *517*]: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that for 1985 the information is as follows:

Civil actions against officers of the Metropolitan Police for assault (note 1) against members of the public, 1985

	Number	*Payments made* £
Actions initiated in 1985	63	
Actions completed (notes 2 and 3) in 1985:		
(a) By decisions of a court	4	3,255
(b) By settlement out of court	31	108,145

Notes

1. Assault was not necessarily the only cause of action.

2. The figures of actions completed do not include four cases settled in 1985 in which proceedings were not formally initiated against the Metropolitan Police because the force admitted liability. Payments made in these cases totalled £9,500.

3. Of the 35 Metropolitan Police cases completed in 1985, only five (all out of court settlements) were cases initiated in that year.

I understand from the chief constable of West Midlands police that eight such actions were initiated against officers of the force in 1985 but information about actions completed in that year is not readily available.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Projects

59. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of United Kingdom aid funds through the European Economic Community is devoted to *(a)* population projects and *(b)* improvements in the economic position of women.

Mr. Raison: Figures are not available in the form requested, but the third Lomé convention provides for the first time that the appraisal of all European Community aid projects and programmes under it will take account of their impact on the status and role of women, and on the balance between demographic structure and other resources.

Overseas Students

60. **Mr. Bowen Wells** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many overseas students have been financed *(a)* by the Overseas Development Administration and *(b)* from other sources in his Department in each year 1979 to 1985 to study in Britain compared with the total number of overseas students studying in Britain in each of the same years.

Mr. Raison: The number of overseas students supported in the United Kingdom under overseas Development Administration and other Foreign and Commonwealth Office support schemes on 31 December 1979 was 8,449, compared with a total overseas student population of 87,800. The comparable estimated figures for 31 December 1985 were 9,192 and 55,500 respectively. The information is as follows:

Overseas students studying in Britain 1979-80 to 1985-86

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
(a) ODA							
(i) Financed during year	16,021	14,215	13,451	11,710	11,847	12,841	*13,500
(ii) Here on 31 December	8,240	6,597	5,441	4,758	5,303	5,120	*5,500
(b) FCO (Other Sources)							
(i) Financed during year	209	215	204	229	2,595	3,780	*3,800
(ii) Here on 31 December	209	215	204	229	2,500	3,720	3,692
Totals							
(i) Financed during year	16,230	14,430	13,655	11,939	14,442	16,621	*17,300
(ii) Here on 31 December	8,449	6,812	5,645	4,987	7,803	8,840	9,192
Total No. Overseas Students (here on 31 December, University and 1 November, Other)	87,800	85,300	75,000	64,200	56,600	55,400	55,500

* Estimated.

Aid Expenditure

61. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his latest estimate of the total official overseas aid expenditure for 1985-86.

Mr. Raison: Funds available for aid expenditure in 1985-86 are £1,200 million. Actual expenditure is still subject to a number of uncertainties which affect the spending outturn on most of the items in the aid programme.

Aid (UN Target)

62. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government expect to achieve the United Nations' target of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product for overseas aid.

Mr. Raison: The Government remain committed to the principle of the UN target for aid, but progress towards it must depend on developments in our economy and other claims on resources. The recently announced increases for aid up to 1988-89 should more than maintain the real value of the programme.

Pest Control

63. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning the current work in hand of the Tropical Development Research Institute in respect of pest control.

Mr. Raison: Approximately one third of TDRI staff work on pest control. The main targets are major agricultural crops afflicted with widespread and migratory pests; and important storage pests. The programme also extends to some carriers of human and animal diseases, such as tsetse flies and blackflies. Much of the effort relates to Africa, but there is a significant Asian element as well.

Nicaragua

64. **Dame Judith Hart** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the proposed loan by the Inter-American Development Bank to the private agricultural sector in Nicaragua.

Mr. Raison: The project is still under discussion between the bank and Nicaragua; a loan proposal has yet to be placed before the board.

Voluntary Agencies

65. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the level of support for the voluntary aid agencies in the forthcoming financial year.

Mr. Raison: Details of the level of direct support from the aid programme to the voluntary aid agencies for the coming financial year will be included in the supply estimates which will be published tomorrow, 18 March. In the 1985-86 estimates, provision for direct grants to the voluntary agencies amounts in total to £13·8 million.

Aid Programme

66. **Mr. Chope** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied that the aid programme works sufficiently to the advantage of British industry.

Mr. Raison: British industry benefits substantially from the aid programme. Bilateral aid is generally tied to procurement in Britain and the value of multilateral aid contracts placed in Britain exceeds the value of our contributions to the agencies concerned. Over the last three years, the aid and trade provision has supported £1 billion of exports. By 1988-89, the new soft loan scheme is expected to enable us to double the amount of ATP-supported business annually.

Ethiopia

67. **Mr. Stuart Holland** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of his Department regarding the use by the Ethiopian Government or by agencies operating in Ethiopia of United Kingdom overseas aid funds to support the Ethiopian Government's programme of internal deportations; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: We provide no support for the Ethiopian Government's current resettlement programme. Our aid to Ethiopia is carefully monitored, and we are satisfied it has not been used to promote resettlement.

Joint Funding Scheme

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what allocations have been made through the joint funding scheme for 1985 and 1986; which voluntary organisations have been given grants; and for what purposes.

Mr. Raison: A total of £4·8 million was allocated to the joint funding scheme for the financial year 1985-86. Grants have been made to the following agencies:

Action Aid
Aga Khan Foundation (UK)
Appropriate Health Resources and Technologies Action Group Ltd
Catholic Fund for Overseas Development
Catholic Institute for International Relations
Christian Aid
Commonwealth Society for the Deaf
Euro Action Accord
Feed the Minds
Friends of Jairos Jiri
Help the Aged
Interlink
International Voluntary Service
Leonard Cheshire Foundation
Leprosy Mission
National Childrens Homes
Ockenden Venture
OXFAM
Population Concern
Population Services
Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind
Salvation Army
Save the Children Fund
Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund
SOS Children's Villages
SOS Sahel
Tear Fund
Water Aid
World University Service

World Vision of Britain
Young Mens Christian Association
Zimbabwe Trust

These grants have been provided to support over 700 long-term development projects in a large number of developing countries. The projects encompass a wide range of activities including the application of appropriate technology, improving local water supplies, developing more effective production and marketing techniques, improving farming methods, non-formal education, primary health care and family planning.

Westland Helicopters

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why moneys to subsidise the export of Westland helicopters to India are to be paid out of aid funds directly instead of under the aid and trade provision.

Mr. Raison: In November 1983 the Government of India requested aid from our regular bilateral programme to them for the purchase of 21 Westland W30 helicopters and I considered and agreed the request on this basis.

TRANSPORT

Stansted Airport

Mr. Haselhurst asked the Secretary of State for Transport why he has approved a safeguarded area at Stansted of 810 acreas when at the public inquiry the British Airports Authority asked for 500 acres to 570 acres.

Mr. Michael Spicer: At the airports inquiries, two options for the location of a possible second terminal at Stansted were considered. In option A, recommended by the inspector, the terminal would be located to the north-east of the approved development site. The inspector noted that this option was expected to require 270 hectares (667 acres). In considering the area to be safeguarded, I took into account the need for the area to encompass the realignment of public roads, not taken into account at the time of the inquiry, so as to minimise the impact on the woods in the area, notably Eastend wood, about which the inspector expressed concern.

A substantial part of this wood, which the BAA owns, lay outside the original boundary, as did about half of Little Newlands wood. The revised boundary which I have approved encompasses these woods and an area beyond them for the public roads to be reprovided. In other places it has been possible to reduce slightly the extent of the original boundary. The net result is that the area which is to be safeguarded is 327 hectares (about 810 acres).

London (Lorry Ban)

11. **Mr. Moynihan** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what new information he has as to the effectiveness of the Greater London council lorry ban and, in particular, the number of exemption permits issued by the Greater London council.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Since the GLC had granted 20,000 permits and it appears refused none, information on effectiveness is difficult to come by. Londoners are benefiting from a 20 per cent. reduction in lorry movement as a result of the M25 bringing daytime as well as night-time benefits.

National Bus Company

12. **Mr. Watts** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the present timetable for the disposal of each of the National Bus Company subsidiaries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: The Transport Act 1985 requires the National Bus Company to dispose of all its operations by January 1989. The company will be advertising these for sale, and I hope that it can achieve substantial privatisation dufing this year, preferably by management or employee buy-outs of local subsidiaries.

20. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what impact he expects the sale of the National Bus Company to have on rural bus services.

Mr. David Mitchell: The sale of NBC will be in line with the Government's policy of promoting competition in the bus industry. I believe this will be of benefit to all bus services, including those in rural areas.

32. **Mr. Dixon** askd the Secretary of State for Transport, what changes to bus services he expects from the sale of the National Bus Company.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 6 March.

Trunk Roads

13. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is satisfied with present standards of trunk road maintenance.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are increasing funds for maintenance. In the present financial year we have renewed about 145 miles of all-purpose trunk road—45 miles more than we expected at the start of the year—and 70 miles of motorway. Next year we intend to renew about 185 miles of all-purpose trunk road and 80 miles of motorway. This is progress.

Transport Act 1985

14. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received any further representations about the operation of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received a number of such representations.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet representatives of the proposed passenger transport joint boards to discuss the likely impact of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have met representatives of some of the passenger transport joint boards, and stand ready to do so in future when there are matters of substance they wish to discuss.

Airports (Security)

15. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent action he has taken to provide for the security of travellers at airports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have given security a lot of attention in recent months. In particular, I attended the

International Civil Aviation Organisation's council meeting in June last year, which resulted in a tightening up of the international security standards and recommendations in annex 17 to the Chicago convention; I have carried out a thorough review of United Kingdom aviation security measures; I have arranged for greater security to be provided for the El Al operation at Heathrow and Manchester airports; and I have taken steps to ensure that the new terminal at Stansted and the redeveloped terminal 3 at Heathrow will incorporate suitable security features.

Local Government Reform (Public Transport)

17. **Mr. Clay** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the quality of public transport in the metropolitan county areas.

Mr. Ridley: In recent months I have met the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and most of the new passenger transport authorities. I have also received a number of letters about public transport in the metropolitan county area.

19. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the operation of the public transport system in Greater Manchester following the abolition of the Greater Manchester council.

Mr. David Mitchell: I met the Greater Manchester passenger transport authority on 14 January and have received a number of letters from it and from others about public transport in the area.

Bus Services

18. **Dr. Roger Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what changes he expects in the numbers of bus services in the evenings following the start of a deregulated bus service.

Mr. David Mitchell: Deregulation will encourage bus operators to respond more flexibly to passenger demand, but local authorities will still be able to subsidise particular services if there are gaps in the commercial provisions.

Heathrow and Gatwick (Scheduling Committees)

21. **Mr. Steen** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received about the future of the scheduling committees at Heathrow and Gatwick; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have recently received representations from several sources, including hon. Members of the House and a variety of civil aviation interests. For the most part they have paid credit to the efficient operation of the airport scheduling committees. I associate myself with that view.

DVLC, Swansea

22. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the effectiveness of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre at Swansea; and if he is satisfied with its efficiency.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I receive a regular variety of representations about the effectiveness of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre. I am satisfied that it is currently providing a generally acceptable standard of service.

BREL, Crewe

23. **Mrs. Dunwoody** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise with him the future of the British Rail Engineering Ltd. foundry at Crewe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. The future of the foundry at Crewe is a management matter for British Rail Engineering Ltd.

Concessionary Fares

24. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is satisfied with London Regional Transport's implementation of Government policy on concessionary travel.

Mr. David Mitchell: Government policy is that arrangements for concessionary travel should remain as far as possible the responsibility of local authorities. In London, the boroughs have agreed on the continuation of the existing arrangements which LRT will be administering on their behalf.

31. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received following the publication of his concessionary fare regulations under the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have received one such representation.

MOT Testers

25. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with the present arrangements for the licensing and relicensing of MOT testers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. The arrangements are to be reviewed. I expect to propose improvements to tester training later this year.

Channel Tunnel

16. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to publicise the implications for travellers of the construction of a Channel fixed link.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is for the Channel Tunnel Group-France-Manche as promoters of the scheme to publicise the implications for travellers.

CTG-FM has said it will provide an all-weather, no-booking shuttle service that will be significantly quicker than the existing ferry services across the Dover straits, as well as enabling through rail services to be operated by BR and SNCF.

40. **Mr. Hayward** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has for the total value of investment in the United Kingdom which will result from the construction of the Channel fixed link.

46. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what he estimates will be the employment and economic benefits of the Channel tunnel project for regions other than the south-east.

Mr. David Mitchell: The basic cost of the CTG-FM project is estimated by the promoters at £2·6 billion, including construction, materials and equipment, split

between the UK and France. CTG-FM has said that orders for about £800 million-worth of materials and equipment will be required on the UK side, and that large numbers of firms, predominantly outside the south-east, will be well-placed to compete for contracts. To this should be added, expenditure of up to £210 million by BR on rolling stock. Taking into account that materials and equipment will constitute more than half the total investment, I expect that the majority of jobs generated directly by the construction of the fixed link will be outside the south-east.

In the longer term British industry as a whole will benefit in its ability to compete from the more efficient transport to and from the continent that the tunnel will provide, in the form of better access to the large continental markets.

42. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what further progress has been made with the promoters on the programme for constructing a Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Ridley: The concession agreement between the United Kingdom Government, the French Government, the Channel Tunnel Group Limited and France-Manche SA was signed as of 14 March. It specifies that preliminary studies and preparatory works shall be carried out within three years of the agreement coming into force, breakthrough of the service tunnel will be made within seven years and construction will be completed within 10 years. The concessionaires' own timetable envisages the link coming into operation by 1993. Copies of the concession agreement will be placed in the Library.

43. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to publicise the provisions of the treaty that the construction of the Channel fixed link will require no public funds.

Mr. David Mitchell: We shall publish shortly the concession agreement with the two companies which confirms and amplifies the position on public funds.

Mr. Couchman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to ensure access for ferry operators to facilities such as customs and immigration clearance and direct motorway and express rail links of a standard equivalent to those to be provided for the operators of the fixed Channel link; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: My aim is to ensure that road connections to ferry ports are of an appropriate standard to meet expected levels of traffic. Investment on improved rail links will need to meet the usual criteria for BR investment. Any investment within ports, on improved immigration and customs facilities, is a matter for the port authorities after consultation with the Government Departments concerned in the light of the foreseeable level of usage.

LRT (Modernisation Investment)

26. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what investment he has approved by London Regional Transport for modernisation.

Mr. David Mitchell: The approved external finance limit for 1985-86 allows for LRT to spend £230 million on investment in renewing and modernising the system. My Department is contributing £193 million in grant towards that programme. In 1986-87 capital grants will be increased to £216 million to support a planned investment programme worth £261 million. Significant projects approved during 1985-86 include the purchase of 260 new buses, the introduction of an automatic ticketing system on the Underground, modernisation of Bank station and comprehensive renewal of the Underground's power supply.

Road Deaths

27. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether there has been any reduction in the figures for road deaths for the first three quarters of 1985, compared with the equivalent periods for previous years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The relevant figures are as follows:

Road deaths: January-September: 1981-1985: Great Britain

	Number
1981	4,235
1982	4,288
1983	3,912
1984	3,975
1985	*3,600

* Provisional

Road deaths for January-September 1985 were respectively 11 per cent. and 9 per cent. fewer than in the corresponding periods of 1984 and 1983. 1983 was the lowest year for road deaths since 1956.

British Rail (Catering)

28. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise with him the subject of the encouragement of more private sector catering trolley services on British Rail routes which lack buffet services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have asked the British Rail chairman to obtain more supply and support services from the private sector, including catering. I am pleased that private trolley services are now operating on several BR routes. I want to see them on many more. The BR board tells me it would welcome further proposals and I hope that private firms will come forward with them. In effect there is an open invitation to caterers to identify a train service where travellers provide a market and put a proposition to BR. It is also an invitation to travellers who want a service where one is not now provided to draw attention to the opportunity.

British Rail (Provincial Services)

29. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss provincial services.

Mr. David Mitchell: Matters affecting provincial services are often raised when my right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of British Rail.

London Regional Transport

30. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he plans to further reduce the direct cost to the ratepayer of London Regional Transport.

Mr. David Mitchell: Government objectives given to LRT in 1984 set tough targets to reduce real unit costs progressively and hence the burden of revenue support on the ratepayers. LRT is meeting or bettering these targets. Ratepayers have already benefitted by a 1p in the pound reduction in their rates for 1986-87. We have approved higher levels of investment and given priority to cost-saving projects. So ratepayers face the welcome prospect of a continuing reduction in the cost of running London Regional Transport.

British Airways

33. **Mr. Robert Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Airways, he will raise with him the planned sale of British Airways helicopter division; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport gave to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) on 21 February at column *384*. There has been no change in the situation since then, and I see no need to raise the matter with the chairman of British Airways.

British Rail (Investment)

34. **Mr. Bowen Wells** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many, and what value, of the investment schemes submitted by British Rail to his Department for approval in the last two years have been approved and rejected, respectively.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have approved 11 schemes with a total value of £650 million and rejected none. Two schemes are still under consideration.

Road Contracts

35. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many major national road contracts have been completed *(a)* late and *(b)* early in the last year.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Thirty-six major national road contracts have been completed in 1985-86. All finished within the contract period, although in some cases extensions of time were granted to take account of factors, such as bad weather, outside the contractor's control. In terms of the original completion date, 19 contracts finished early and a further eight were on time.

Trolley Buses (Leeds and Bradford)

36. **Mr. Waller** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the West Yorkshire passenger transport authority concerning the possibility of Government grants for the reintroduction of trolley buses in the cities of Leeds and Bradford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am currently considering an application from the West Yorkshire passenger transport executive for grant under section 56 of the Transport Act 1968 in respect of a proposed trolley bus system in Leeds.

Bus Lanes

37. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about bus lanes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Various bodies and individuals, including hon. Members, raise points for or against bus lanes from time to time, including availability for other kinds of traffic. A number of recent representations have concerned schemes being pressed ahead by the GLC.

British Rail (Privatisation)

38. **Mr. Franks** asked the Secretary of State for Transport which services relating to the railway operations of British Rail, excluding hotels and land, have been privatised since 1979.

Mr. David Mitchell: The British Railways Board has privatised the ferry services formerly provided by Seaspeed and Sealink. It is also encouraging private firms to the tender for a range of products and services, competing with the board's in-house suppliers on fair and equal terms.

London (Minibuses)

39. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of London Regional Transport, he will raise with him the use by London Regional Transport of minibuses on London bus routes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I meet Dr. Bright regularly to discuss a wide range of topics. I see no reason to raise the question of minibuses with him at present.

Train Services (Disabled People)

41. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with British Rail management regarding travelling conditions for disabled people needing to use train services.

Mr. David Mitchell: My officials meet British Rail frequently to discuss travelling conditions for disabled people. The latest occasion was at a meeting of the British Railways Board advisory group on transport for the disabled which was held on 5 March.

Cars (Child Restraints)

44. **Mr. Roger King** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department takes to promote the use of restraints for children in cars.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department has incorporated the subject of restraints for children in cars in its current rolling programme of road safety advertising. During the last two weeks of March, a series of national newspaper advertisements will draw attention to the hazards of unsecured children in cars and to the advantages of using approved restraints.

Additionally, an illustrated and practical advisory leaflet is being updated and reissued. We are responding to the concern of one BBC television programme "That's Life". We are encouraging local community groups to promote awareness and action.

HGV (Test Fee)

45. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking on the level of the heavy goods vehicle driver test fee.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department has just reviewed the heavy goods vehicle and public service vehicle driver tests and fees. We shall be consulting on proposed changes shortly.

The changes we propose will alter the length of the tests and, in the interests of road safety all the exercises in the PSV test will be conducted off the road. The HGV driver test will be no less rigorous but shorter.

We propose to reduce the HGV fee from £65 to £40 and to increase the PSV fee, which has not changed since 1982, from £36 to £40. This should provide a net saving of some £1 million to candidates.

Motorways (Accidents)

47. **Mr. Ottaway** asked the Secretary of State for Transport which European Community country has the lowest rates for fatal accidents on motorways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The most useful indicator compares motorway deaths to the amount of traffic: information is readily available for the following countries.

Car user deaths per 100 million vehicle-kilometres: Motorways: 1984

	Number
France	0·9
West Germany	0·8
Great Britain	0·5

More comprehensive information is available on death rates per 100 kilometres of motorway.

Deaths per 100 kilometres of motorways EC Countries: 1984

	Number
Belgium	11
Germany	9
Denmark	*4
Spain	17
France	8
United Kingdom	7
Greece	n.a.
Italy	*13
Ireland	†0
Luxembourg	n.a.
Netherlands	7
Portugal	n.a.

* 1983 figure.
† Only 9 kilometres of motorway.
n.a. Not available.

Road Casualties

48. **Mr. Dickens** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he will publish the 1985 road user casualty figures.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The next road casualty press notice, covering provisional figures for the fourth quarter and the whole of 1985, will be issued on 17 April.

Railways (Punctuality)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the relative performance of British Rail and other railway systems in the European Community on punctuality.

Mr. David Mitchell: None.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to the answer of 12 March, he will make a statement on the causes of the deterioration of punctuality of British Rail express services; and if he will publish in the Official Report the figures on which the answer was based.

Mr. David Mitchell: Those are management matters for the British Railways Board.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to the answer of 12 March, he will provide a breakdown by region of British Rail's punctuality for both express and non-express services.

Mr. David Mitchell: I do not yet have this information for the period covered in the answer of 12 March.

UK-Canada Air Services

Mr. Thornton asked the Secretary of State for Transport what were the results of the recent bilateral negotiations held between the United Kingdom and Canada on air services, between the two countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The UK-Canada air services negotiations held in London in late January were initiated by the UK with a view to replacing the existing 1949 air services agreement with new arrangements more responsive to market requirements. Useful progress was made, and it is expected that the negotiations will be resumed shortly.

M3 (Bar End-Chilworth)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be able to make his determination upon the public inquiry into the last section of the M3 motorway from Bar End to Chilworth.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The inspector's report is still expected. I do not expect to be able to make an announcement before the late summer.

Severe Weather Damage

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his preliminary estimate of the amount of damage done to the roads, the railways, the ports and the airports of the United Kingdom as a result of the current year's exceptionally cold weather.

Mr. Ridley: No reports of exceptional damage to roads have so far been received. However, their general condition is monitored regularly and the results are taken into account in determining the provision of funds for maintenance. It is for the appropriate operator to assess any damage caused to railways, ports and airports. I am not aware of exceptional problems.

Coach Routes

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to control the routes taken by coaches operating for hire and reward; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Local authorities already have powers under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to restrict the routes taken through their areas by vehicles of any type, including coaches and other passenger-carrying vehicles. As with all aspects of traffic regulation, we shall keep an eye on the matter.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is yet in a position to say how many staff in his Department will be working wholly or partly on functions arising out of the Local Government Act 1985 and the implementation of the abolition of the metropolitan county councils and the Greater London council during the financial year 1986-87; what are the estimated costs for 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: At present I have nothing further to add to the reply to the hon. Member given by my right hon. Friend on 21 January at column *142*.

M1-M25 (Lane Markings)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will arrange for lane markings on the M1 on the approaches to the M25 relating to the laning of traffic passing through the junction to begin sufficiently far from the junction that at peak times and current levels of congestion traffic has sufficient warning of the junction arrangements to enter the correct lane before reaching the stretch likely to be congested; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The problem at junction 6 between M1 and A405 will largely disappear when the M1/M25 interchange is opened in the autumn.

I am grateful for my hon. Friend's suggestion. Arrangements are being made to provide temporary carriageway markings and appropriate road signs on the southbound carriageway of M1 approaching junction 6.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, further to the reply to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, he will take immediate steps to ensure that traffic can move more quickly from the M1 to the M25.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Traffic signals have already been erected at the junctions of A405 with M1 and with M25 to and from the west. A dedicated lane has also been provided to permit traffic from the M1 southbound exit slip road to filter on to A405. These measures have made congestion less severe than it would otherwise have been. Physical constraints make it impossible to do much more in the comparatively short time before the M1-M25 interchange is opened.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will investigate the possibility of using the hard shoulder of the M1 as an additional lane for traffic leaving the motorway to join the M25.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The hard shoulder adjacent to the southbound carriageway of the M1 immediately north of junction 6 narrows considerably at the A405 overbridge, at the point where the southbound exit slip road begins. This constraint makes it impracticable to use the hard shoulder as a running lane.

A11 (Accidents)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of the fatal and personal injury accidents which occurred in each of the years between 1979 and 1985 on the section of the A11 west of the B1106 junction to the edge of Elveden parish, west of the Elveden memorial.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Civil Defence

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what joint plans have been agreed by the Government for the services of British Rail, including its workers and rolling stock, to be made available in the United Kingdom to support foreign military forces involved in the reinforcement of Europe if this became necessary during grave national tension;

(2) what joint plans have been agreed by the Government for the services of transport workers to be made available in the United Kingdom to support foreign military forces involved in the reinforcement of Europe if this became necessary during grave national tension;

(3) what joint plans have been agreed by the Government for workers in the civil aviation, ports or shipping industries to be made available in the United Kingdom to support foreign military forces involved in the reinforcement of Europe if this became necessary during grave national tension.

Mr. Ridley: An arrangement between the United States and the United Kingdom permits the United States to establish, operate and maintain lines of communication and anciliary facilities in the United Kingdom for use under emergency conditions as part of their NATO obligations, with the proviso that United Kingdom Government's requirements take priority. Detailed planning in support of this arrangement is classified.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what joint plans have been agreed by the Government for civil aviation facilities, including airports and aircraft to be made available in the United Kingdom to support foreign military forces involved in the reinforcement of Europe if this became necessary during grave national tension.

Mr. Ridley: An arrangement between the United States and the United Kingdom permits the United States Forces to establish, operate and maintain lines of communication and ancillary facilities in the United Kingdom for use under emergency conditions as part of their NATO obligations. As part of this arrangement the United Kingdom has agreed to consider requests for such facilities with the proviso that the United Kingdom Government always has priority in using national resources. Details of the plans in support of this arrangement are classified.

ENERGY

Coal (Productivity)

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give coal industry productivity figures, showing the overall output per manshift and the output per manshift on the coal face for each month since April 1985.

Mr. David Hunt: NCB average overall revenue and production output per manshift in each month since April 1985 was as follows:

	Overall revenue tonnes	*Production tonnes*
4 weeks ending 27 April 1985	2·11	9·64
5 weeks ending 1 June 1985	2·37	10·87
4 weeks ending 29 June 1985	2·56	11·29
5 weeks ending 3 August 1985	2·47	11·39
4 weeks ending 31 August 1985	2·55	11·15
4 weeks ending 28 September 1985	2·76	11·75
5 weeks ending 2 November 1985	2·85	12·32
4 weeks ending 30 November 1985	2·92	12·91
4 weeks ending 28 December 1985*	2·65	12·26
5 weeks ending 1 February 1986*	2·83	12·61
4 weeks ending 1 March 1986	3·06	13·35

* Affected by Christmas and New Year holidays.

Coal Industry (Manpower Statistics)

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many miners have left the coal industry since April 1985 up to the end of February 1986; and what are the present figures for numbers employed giving surface and underground figures separately.

Mr. David Hunt: Between 30 March 1985 and 1 March 1986 there was a reduction of 31,637, to 139,742, in the number of men on colliery books. Of this latter figure 114,679 were employed in underground grades.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Energy what are the latest figures for workers in the coal mining industry in each of the coalfields, and giving the number of pits still working and specifying those which are profitable and unprofitable at the present time.

Mr. David Hunt: As at 1 March 1986 the numbers of men on colliery books and producing collieries in each NCB Area were as follows:

	Men on Books	*Collieries*
Scotland	7,735	9
North East	17,952	11
North Yorkshire	20,270	22
South Yorkshire	18,082	19
North Derbyshire	9,344	9
Nottinghamshire	26,723	22
South Midlands	9,358	10
Kent	1,450	3
Western	15,354	13
South Wales	13,474	17
TOTAL	139,742	135

Many pits are making considerable progress with measures to improve profitability but these cannot usefully be assessed over a short period.

Coal-exporting Countries

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will list the countries that are exporting coal to Great Britain, giving the annual tonnages over each of the past five years;

(2) what information he has as to which countries are dumping coal in western Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Imports of coal into the United Kingdom have been as follows:

*United Kingdom coal imports**

'000 tonnes

Origin	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
EC countries					
France	1	14	7	229	28
Federal Republic of Germany	132	334	482	959	746
Irish Republic	5	3	4	17	12
Netherlands	8	43	86	304	306
Belgium	7	34	63	232	167
Greece	—	2	—	—	—
Denmark	—	—	—	11	2
Total EC	153	431	642	1,753	1,263
Non-EC countries					
Australia	1,791	1,143	1,987	1,859	5,390
United States of America	1,954	2,053	1,142	3,344	3,145
Poland	142	320	509	1,359	1,387
South Africa	80	67	58	257	725
Canada	—	—	—	117	399
Columbia	—	—	—	—	89
Bulgaria	—	—	—	—	81
German Democratic Republic	—	—	—	74	37
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	34	12	23	11	23
Other	136	36	95	120	97
Total Non-EC	4,137	3,631	3,814	7,141	11,372
Grand Total	4,290	4,062	4,456	8,894	12,635

Data about third country imports of coal into the European Community are published by the Statistical Office of the European Communities.
Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Civil Defence

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what joint plans have been agreed by the Government for services of workers in the energy supply or distribution industries to be made available in the United Kingdom to support foreign military forces involved in the reinforcement of Europe if this became necessary during grave national tension;

(2) what joint plans have been agreed by the Government for supplies of petroleum oil and lubricants to be made available in the United Kingdom to support foreign military forces involved in the reinforcement of Europe if this became necessary during grave national tension.

Mr Peter Walker: Such plans have been laid under a US-UK lines of communication arrangement which stems from the NATO obligations of the US, but with UK requirements taking priority. Details of planning in support of this arrangement are classified.

Petroleum Production

Mr. Stanbrook asked the Secretary of State for Energy what are the Government's latest forecasts of the level of United Kingdom petroleum production.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The latest forecasts for United Kingdom petroleum production in the years 1986 to 1990 are as follows:

	Million tonnes
1986	120-135
1987	110-130
1988	100-125
1989	90-120
1990	85-115

As in previous years, these forecasts represent a range of levels of possible petroleum production for each year. The ranges make allowance for the considerable technical and geological uncertainties which influence the rate of oil production from both mature and recently developed fields.

The figures comprise stabilised crude oil and natural gas liquids. Production of the latter has built up rapidly in the last few years as follows:

	Million tonnes of NGLs
1981	1·5
1982	2·9
1983	4·1
1984	4·7
1985	*5·1

* Provisional.

NGLs are expected to account for some 5 million tonnes annually of total petroleum production to 1990. Total production in 1985 of stabilised crude and NGLs is estimated to have been 127·5 million tonnes.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Ministry of Agriculture (Employees' Leave)

Mr. Budgen asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will withdraw the Ministry of Agriculture (N.I.) circular AEC 15/86, which prohibits annual leave or flexi-leave where employees are thought to intend to spend all or part of it in political activities.

Dr. Boyson: No; this circular was simply a reminder to staff of their existing responsibilities.

Anglo-Irish Agreement (Legal Sub-group)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what are the functions of the judicial sub-committee set up at January's Anglo-Irish meeting;

(2) when the judicial sub-committee set up at January's Anglo-Irish meeting will meet; if its findings will be made public; and if it will take submissions from outside public bodies;

(3) who are the members of the judicial sub-committee set up at January's Anglo-Irish meeting.

Mr. Scott: The legal sub-group met on 13 February. Copies of the joint statement issued after the meeting have been placed in the Library.

Proscribed Organisations (Membership)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons charged with offences relating to membership of *(a)* the Irish Republican Army, *(b)* the Irish National Liberation Army, *(c)* the Ulster Volunteer Force, *(d)* the Ulster Defence Association and *(e)* any other proscribed organisation, have been granted bail since 1979.

Mr. Scott: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons charged with offences relating to membership of *(a)* the Irish Republican Army, *(b)* the Irish National Liberation Army, *(c)* the Ulster Volunteer Force, *(d)* the Ulster Defence Association and *(e)* any other proscribed organisation, have been convicted on the basis of uncorroborated evidence over the last four years.

Mr. Scott: Courts make their decisions having regard to all the admissible evidence placed before them. It is not possible to identify cases in which the eventual decision might have depended only on uncorroborated evidence.

Evidence

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if United Kingdom representatives attending the judicial sub-committee set up at January's Anglo-Irish meeting will raise the subject of the use of uncorroborated evidence in no-jury courts; if he has any information as to whether representatives from the Republic of Ireland will seek to raise this subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The legal sub-group of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference met on 13 February. A copy has been placed in the Library.

At the meeting of the legal sub-group of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference on 13 February, Ministers authorised further work by officials on matters of mutual concern, including the search for measures to enhance public confidence in the administration of justice. This work is still in hand.

War Emergency Headquarters

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements have been made for the provision of war emergency headquarters in Northern Ireland by local authorities.

Mr. Scott: With the assistance of the district councils, the Government plan to create 26 district civil defence centres by designating existing buildings and adapting them where necessary.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements have been made for the provision of protected war emergency headquarters in Northern Ireland by Government Departments in the region.

Mr. Scott: Government Departments in Northern Ireland have made arrangements to co-ordinate essential civil services in war emergencies using selected existing buildings. The Government have announced that the effectiveness of these arrangements will be enhanced by the construction of three purpose-built protected centres in the region. This is scheduled to begin in 1987 and to be completed during 1989.

WALES

Health and Social Services

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing separately for (i) hospital and community health services, (ii) family practitioner services and (iii) social services, actual and planned expenditure in Wales for the years 1978-79 to 1988-89 in *(a)* cash prices, *(b)* cost terms and *(c)* volume terms, and showing the percentage increases over 1978-79, on a basis consistent with table 2.12 of Cmnd. 9702-II.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The following tables contain the information requested. Since expenditure is given net of patient charges in table 2·12 of Cmnd 9702-II, the expenditure figures ae given on a net basis. Actual expenditure figures may differ from planned as a result of transfers between revenue and capital expenditure. The expenditure figures also exclude current and capital expenditure on central health and miscellaneous services.

Cash (£ million)

	1978-79	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*Percentage increase (1978-79 to 1985-86)*
Hospital and community health services	297·0	350·2	454·9	518·5	561·3	591·7	634·5	675·9	719·9	142
Family practitioner services	92·3	106·4	131·3	149·4	172·7	185·5	203·4	206·9	218·6	137
Social services	63·8	77·6	93·9	99·7	108·3	119·2	124·1	130·3	143·6	125

Note:
(1) The health and personal social services programme forms part of the block within which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has discretion to apportion the total provision as he chooses. No decisions have yet been made beyond 1986-87.

Real (cost) terms (£ million)

	1978-79	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*Percentage increase (1978-79 to 1985-86)*
Hospital and community health services	528·7	533·4	583·4	604·6	611·6	617·1	634·5	643·7	656·1	24·1
Family practitioner services	164·3	162·1	168·4	174·2	188·2	193·5	203·4	197·1	199·2	21·2
Social Services	113·6	118·2	120·4	116·3	118·0	124·3	124·1	124·1	130·9	15·2

Notes:
(1) The health and personal social services programme forms part of the block within which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has discretion to apportion the total provision as he chooses. No decisions have yet been made beyond 1986-87.
(2) Actual expenditure has been adjusted to take account of the effects of general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator.

"Volume" (2) terms (£ million)

	1978-79	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*Percentage increase (1978-79 to 1984-85)*
Hospital and community health services	580·0	568·3	577·3	609·2	621·6	625·0	634·5	9·4
Family practitioner services	194·8	191·9	188·7	189·8	196·4	200·2	203·4	4·4
Social services	119·6	123·8	124·3	117·5	118·8	124·7	124·1	3·8

Notes:
(1) Pay and prices indices for H&PSS programmes are not available for 1985-86, nor for the public expenditure planning period.
(2) The pay and prices indices used for H&PSS programmes are those calculated by the Department of Health and Social Security from English data.

Ministerial Appointments

Mr. Ray Powell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has delegated to other Ministers in his Department the power to make, on his behalf, appointments to any public bodies in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: In relation to appointments for which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is the appointing Minister, it is the practice for some invitations to individuals to serve on public bodies to be issued on his behalf by another Departmental Minister.

Public Bodies (Appointees)

Mr. Ray Powell asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) why he does not keep records of any political affiliation of appointees to public bodies in Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(2) to what extent in selecting appointees to public bodies in Wales, he takes account of any political affiliations of the candidates; whether the extent to which account is taken of these varies according to the appointment concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: In making appointments to public bodies, it is our policy to select the best person for the job bearing in mind all factors relevant to the post. It is not the practice for our Department to keep records of appointees' party political affiliations; in some cases an individual's political affiliations may be known, but more often they are not.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the percentage change in total gross expenditure, current and capital, on the National Health Service for each year since 1975 deflated by *(a)* real terms, *(b)* the retail price index and *(c)* movement in National Health Service pay and prices.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is as follows:

	*In real terms**	*Deflated by the Retail Price Index†*	*Deflated by Movements in NHS pay and Prices‡*
1975-76 to 1976-77	−0·5	−2·7	−1·4
1976-77 to 1977-78	−0·7	−0·7	+4·2
1977-78 to 1978-79	+3·6	+5·8	+4·6
1978-79 to 1979-80	+0·4	+1·3	−2·6
1979-80 to 1980-81	+8·4	+10·6	+0·6
1980-81 to 1981-82	+3·6	+2·3	+5·4
1981-82 to 1982-83	+2·9	+2·9	+3·4
1982-83 to 1983-84	+1·7	+1·5	+1·1
1983-84 to 1984-85	+3·4	+2·8	+2·1

* Actual expenditure has been adjusted to take account of the effects of general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator.
† As NHS expenditure deflated by the R.P.I. has been specifically requested, the information has been presented in this way. It is, however, not correct to compare movements in expenditure in NHS with movements in the R.P.I. since the goods and services purchased by the NHS differ considerably from those purchased by the average household. The appropriate measure to reflect movements in NHS expenditure with the economy as a whole is the GDP deflator.
‡ The pay and prices index used is that maintained by DHSS for hospital and community health services expenditure. A separate index for pay and price movements in the NHS in Wales is not available.

GCSE

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give an assurance that in introduing the new examination courses for the general certificate of secondary education his Department will not discriminate against those pupils receiving their education in Welsh or bilingual secondary schools.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Opportunities for training in preparation for GCSE are being provided by the WJEC, with Government support, for all teachers likely to be involved in the new courses irrespective of the medium of instruction.

Coal Industry (Job Losses)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total figure for job losses in the coal industry in Wales in each year since 1975.

Mr. Mark Robinson: A total figure for job losses in the coal industry in each year since 1975 is not available. The National Coal Board give the following figures for manpower on colliery books at Welsh pits:

End of March	*Thousand men*
1975	33·1
1976	31·8
1977	31·2
1978	30·0
1979	28·6
1980	27·7
1981	26·5
1982	25·5
1983	23·9
1984	21·3
1985	20·5
1986*	14·6

* 8 March.

Equivalent figures for employment at private mines are not available.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total of the job losses in *(a)* the south Wales coalfield and *(b)* the north Wales coalfield since 1955.

Mr. Mark Robinson: A total figure for job losses since 1955 is not available. The National Coal Board give the following figures for manpower on colliery books:

	South Wales coalfield	North Wales coalfield
Average manpower on colliery books 1955	101,300	10,000
Manpower on colliery books as at 8 March 1986	13,400	1,200

Health Education Advisory Committee for Wales

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the chairmanship of the Health Education Advisory Committee for Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I have received recently the resignation of Mr. Norman Whitehouse as chairman of the Committee and consequently as the Welsh representative on the Health Education Council, on his appointment as secretary to the British Dental Association. Mr. Whitehouse has had a most successful tenure as chairman of the committee and I wish him well in his new post. I am pleased to announce that Dr. Simon Small, senior lecturer in general practice at the University of Wales college of medicine, has accepted my invitation to become chairman of the advisory committee with effect from 1 April 1986. He has served on the Health Education Council since 1980 and is already an active member of the advisory committee.

SCOTLAND

Health and Social Services

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing separately for *(i)* hospital and community health services, *(ii)* family practitioner services and *(iii)* social work, actual and planned expenditure in Scotland for the years 1978-79 to 1988-89 in *(a)* cash prices, *(b)* cost terms and *(c)* volume terms, and showing the percentage increases over 1978-79, on a basis consistent with Table 2.12 of Cmnd. 9702-II.

Mr. Rifkind: The information requested is set out in the following tables.

Table A

Hospitals and Community Health Services

£ million

	(a) At cash prices	*(b) In cost terms as measured by GDP deflator**	*(c) As measured by HCHS pay and price deflator**
1978-79	664	1,182	1,297
1979-80	791	1,205	1,283
1980-81	1,006	1,291	1,278
1981-82	1,145	1,335	1,346
1982-83	1,224	1,334	1,356
1983-84	1,298	1,354	1,372
1984-85	1,385	1,385	1,385
1985-86	1,470	1,400	—
1986-87	1,551	1,414	—
1987-88	1,620	1,427	—
1988-89	1,690	1,445	—
Percentage increase 1978-79 to 1988-89	154·5	22·3	6·8

* 1984-85 prices.

Table B

Family Practitioner Services

£ million

	(a) At cash prices	*(b) In cost terms as measured by GDP deflator**	*(c) As measured by FPS pay and price deflator**
1978-79	157	279	331
1979-80	183	279	330
1980-81	227	291	326
1981-82	257	300	326
1982-83	294	320	334
1983-84	316	330	341
1984-85	347	347	347
1985-86	367	350	—
1986-87	396	361	—
1987-88	420	370	—
1988-89	440	376	—
Percentage increase 1978-79 to 1988-89	180·3	34·8	4·8

* 1984-85 prices.

Table C

Personal Social Services

£ million

	(a) At cash prices	*(b) In cost terms as measured by GDP deflator**	*(c) As measured by PSS pay and price deflator**
1978-79	156	278	293
1979-80	197	300	314
1980-81	251	322	332
1981-82	278	324	328
1982-83	298	325	327
1983-84	316	330	330
1984-85	336	336	336
1985-86	351	334	—
1986-87	363	331	—
1987-88	360	317	—
1988-89	360	308	—
Percentage increase 1978-79 to 1988-89	130·8	10·8	14·7

* 1984-85 prices.

Notes:

1. The expenditure figures are on a net basis comparable with those given in table 2·12 of Cmnd. 9702–II.
2. Expenditure on Centrally Financed Health Services is not included.
3. Figures in specific pay and price terms have been constructed by reference to the pay and price indices for Health and Personal Social Services maintained by DHSS for England: no separate pay and prices indices for Scotland are available.
4. Forecasts of pay and price movements for health and personal social services are not available for 1985-86, nor for the public expenditure planning period.

Sporting Premises

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total amount taken in rates on sporting premises region by region in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: The information requested is not held centrally.

Radioactive Discharges

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his reply of 6 March, *Official Report*, columns 249-50, he will list the annual quantity of authorised discharges of uranium and other radioactive materials for each of the sites referred to since 1980.

Mr. Ancram: Details of the amounts of radioactive wastes discharged from these sites are not held centrally. Authorisations issued under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 specify the amounts of radioactive wastes which may be discharged. I am arranging for copies of the relevant authorisations to be placed in the Library of the House.

Tourism

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is being done to give practical effect to his proposal for changes in the planning control of tourist signposting.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend is considering the responses which have been received to the consultation paper on deemed consent for directional advertising signs for tourist attractions, which was issued by the Scottish Development Department last December.

Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has made any study of the operation of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 with particular reference to the way in which its licensing provisions have been implemented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The central research unit of the Scottish Office has carried out a survey of licensing under the 1982 Act, and its report will be published later this year. The report will provide a basis for consulting the various interests concerned, as part of a review which my right hon. and learned Friend is putting in hand of the operation of the licensing provisions of the Act.

Rates

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the level of domestic rate relief in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

Financial year	*Pence in the pound of rateable value* p	*Equivalent in domestic element of rate support grant £ million*
1976-77	27	42·2
1977-78	31	49·7
1978-79	3	13·4
1979-80	3	13·5
1980-81	3	13·8
1981-82	3	14·1
1982-83	3	14·1
1983-84	3	14·3
1984-85	3	14·4
1985-86	8	102·9

Note: The significant changes in the level of domestic rate relief in 1978-79 and 1985-86 reflect the effects of rating revaluation held in those years.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average unrebated domestic rates bill in the year 1984-85 and in each of the previous 12 years.

Mr. Ancram: Estimated average domestic rate bills for Scotland (including water rates) are shown in the table below:

Local authority financial year	£
1972-73 (May-May)	66
1973-74	71
1974-75	83
1975-76 (May-March)	*108
1976-77 (April-March)	123
1977-78	139
1978-79	132
1979-80	149
1980-81	199
1981-82	272
1982-83	310
1983-84	310
1984-85	328

* 10½ months.

Since 1976, these figures have been contained in the publication "Rating Review" regularly issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. Copies are available in the Library.

Mr. Gordon Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what statistics he has to show the level of *(a)* domestic rates, *(b)* commercial rates and *(c)* industrial rates for comparative properties in (i) Scotland and (ii) England when they are expressed as a proportion of capital value.

Mr. Ancram: The basis of valuation for rating is the annual rent a property might be expected to fetch rather than its capital value. Details of capital values of properties are not held centrally. The Government's proposals set out in "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) envisage that domestic rates should be abolished while non-domestic rateable values should continue to be based upon evidence of rental values.

North of Scotland College of Agriculture

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make it his policy to ensure the maintenance of an autonomous North of Scotland college of agriculture;

(2) what approaches have been made by officials of his Department to the North of Scotland college of agriculture regarding a possible merger; what plans he has to alter its present status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: As indicated in my answer of 14 March to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) my right hon. and learned Friend supports the proposal by the Council of the Scottish Agricultural Colleges to form a new company which would have overall responsibility for the management of all the services provided by the Scottish agricultural colleges. Any alteration in the status and constitution of a college — north, west or east — requires the agreement of the board of governors of that college. Officials of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland have kept in close touch with all three colleges since the proposal was first made.

Rowntree-Mackintosh Plant, Edinburgh

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to whether any company has agreed to take over and run Rowntree-Mackintosh's Edinburgh plant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 February 1986, c. *128*]: I understand that the management consultants commissioned by the company have investigated the possibility of finding a manufacturer to continue operating the present factory with its existing work force. After a number of approaches, both in the United Kingdom and other countries, they have concluded that there is no reasonable prospect of finding such an employer. The company has made it clear that the factory and the site could be used for the continuing benefit of the employees and the community. Various suggestions have been made and it may take the company some time to form a judgment on the merits of these proposals.

DEFENCE

Research and Development (Security Classification)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has consulted companies or organisations to be visited by Mr. Paul Hopler or Mr. Clarence Robinson of the Pentagon; and if he has explained to those bodies what powers Mr. Hopler has.

Mr. Norman Lamont: There have been no formal consultations with any of the companies to which visits were planned.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what approaches he has had from the United States Government with a view to imposing security classifications on United Kingdom research and development not connected with his Department's defence contracts.

Mr. Norman Lamont: None.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has given Mr. Paul Hopler and Mr. Clarence Robinson of the Pentagon permission to classify United Kingdom research and development.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his reply of 6 March, if intermediate level nuclear waste will be treated at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, Aldermaston; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Yes. Intermediate level radioactive wastes arise at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, Aldermaston from its nuclear programmes. Up to 1982 most of such wastes were disposed of to sea but now they are stored pending a decision on their ultimate disposal.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Defence if Her Majesty's Government have reached any agreement with the United States Government about the funding by Her Majesty's Government of some strategic defence initiative contracts awarded to Government establishments or to companies bidding for or engaged on strategic defence initiative work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Her Majesty's Government will not participate in the funding of SDI research contracts placed in the United Kingdom by the United States.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Defence if any officials from his Department's strategic defence initiative participation office attended the recent conference on the strategic defence initiative organised by Causa UK.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No.

Defence Programme

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the individual components of the defence programme will not meet their targets on cost and delivery.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to paragraph 503 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985" (Cmnd. 9430) which explains the nature of the forward defence programme and the continuing process of adjustment to it. For these reasons, and because of the complexity of the programme, it is not possible to provide the informaion which is requested.

TAVR

Sir Philip Goodhart asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of volunteers serving with the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve have had some previous service with the regular forces.

Mr. Lee: There are currently 982 officers of the Territorial Army who have had previous service with the regular forces. This represents 14·5 per cent. of the officer strength at 31 January 1986. The corresponding figure for soldiers is 15,301 (21·8 per cent.).

Live Animals (Experimentation)

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to change the conduct of experiments using live animals in his Department's establishments in the light of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill *[Lords]* now before Parliament.

Mr. Lee: Experiments involving live animals are carried out only where the purpose of the work is of real importance and where the most careful consideration of alternatives has demonstrated that none is an adequate substitute. Experiments are conducted in as humane a way as possible and precautions are, and will continue to be, taken to prevent or reduce to the minimum consistent with the authorised procedures any pain, distress or discomfort to the animals. If on any occasion an animal is found to be undergoing excessive suffering it is at once painlessly killed. These considerations will continue to apply. It is the intention of this Department to comply fully with the proposed legislation, as it does with the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876.

War Emergency Headquarters (Northern Ireland)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements have been made for the provision of protected war emergency headquarters in Northern Ireland by the armed forces in the region.

Mr. Stanley: It is not our practice to disclose information on plans for operational military facilities, the publication of which would not be in the public interest.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Devon and Cornwall (EC Aid)

Mr. Penhaligon asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will indicate for the years 1976 to 1985 the total amount of aid granted for projects in Devon and Cornwall separately by the European Community under the heading agriculture guidance fund.

Mr. Jopling: Aid granted from the EAGGF guidance section for projects under regulations 17/64 and 355/77 for the improvement of marketing and processing, and for projects under regulations 1852/78, 31/83 and 2908/83 for the restructuring of the fishing industry, in Devon and Cornwall was as follows:

£ million

	Devon	*Cornwall*
1976	0·017	0·181
1977	0·237	0·048
1978	0·368	0·156
1979	0·116	—
1980	0·499	—
1981	—	0·297
1982	0·062	0·079
1983	0·500	0·133
1984	0·290	0·147
1985	0·558	0·359

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider introducing regulations to impose maximum amounts of individual additives in food products in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer: The Food Advisory Committee keeps the use of additives under review. The committee is currently considering a review of the colouring matter in food and one of the issues which it is addressing is whether there should be maximum permitted levels.

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will arrange for a list of all the flavours currently used in the United Kingdom food supply to be placed in the Library, showing naturally derived, nature identical and synthetic flavours separately.

Mr. Gummer: No such list is available but we are participating in discussions in the European Community, one purpose of which is to enable the European Commission to prepare a list of food flavours used in the Community. In 1981 the Council of Europe published a list of "Flavouring Substances and Natural Sources of Flavourings" (ISBN 2-7160-0081-6).

Badgers

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what requests he has received from Branscombe, Devon, for assistance with the control of badgers following their attack on a young man there earlier in the current year; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: Problems with badger damage at Branscombe, Devon, were first drawn to the attention of my Department in July 1983. Local officials have provided advice on suitable damage prevention and deterrent measures on a number of occasions since then and a senior wildlife biologist met local councillors on 27 January to provide further detailed advice should damage recur in the spring. No evidence of attacks on humans was produced and I believe that accidental collision is an alternative explanation of any such report.

Details of the arrangements for the issue of licences to control badgers causing serious economic damage were explained to councillors but to date no licence applications have been received. Detailed advice has been offered to individual local residents experiencing difficulties.

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will suspend the trapping of badgers suspected of carrying bovine tuberculosis pending the publication of the Dunnet report.

Mrs. Fenner: No. Any reconsideration of my Department's policy for dealing with badgers infected with bovine tuberculosis in areas where they constitute a threat to cattle must await the conclusions of Professor Dunnet's review team.

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he now expects to receive the Dunnet report on badgers' bovine tuberculosis.

Mrs. Fenner: I expect to receive the report shortly.

European Community (Food Sales)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, pursuant to the reply of 10 March, *Official Report*, column *357*, he will publish in the *Official Report*, the basic features of the proposal presented by the Commission to the management committee on 28 February.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Civil Defence

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what joint plans have been agreed by the Government for the services of workers in the food production or distribution industries or in agriculture or fishing to be made available in the United Kingdom to support foreign military forces involved in the reinforcement of Europe if this became necessary during grave national tension;

(2) what joint plans have been agreed by the Government for supplies of food, fish or agricultural produce to be made available in the United Kingdom to support foreign military forces involved in the reinforcement of Europe if this became necessary during grave national tension.

Mrs. Fenner: An arrangement between the United States and the United Kingdom permits the United States to establish, operate and maintain lines of communication and ancillary facilities in the United Kingdom for use under emergency conditions as part of their NATO obligations with the proviso that United Kingdom requirements take priority.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Dining Facilities (Bookings)

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the

names of the sponsoring Member of Parliament or Members of Parliament who have made advance bookings of dining facilities in the Members' Dining Room, the Harcourt Grill Room, the Terrace Marquee and Rooms A, B, C and D, for the month commencing 17 March.

Mr. Biffen: It is not the practice of the Refreshment Department to make public the names of hon. Members sponsoring private functions in the Dining Room and other banqueting facilities.

Mail

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Lord Privy Seal how many post boxes are cleared by the staff of the House of Commons Post Offices; if he will give separately the numbers *(a)* within the Palace of Westminster, *(b)* within the precincts of the House of Commons and *(c)* within outbuildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: The number of post boxes cleared by the House of Commons Post Office staff is 28 and these are all situated within the Palace of Westminster. Within the House of Commons the number of boxes cleared is 21. The House of Commons Post Office staff clear no post boxes within the outbuildings of the House of Commons.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will arrange for all mail posted in parliamentary outbuildings used by the House of Commons to receive a House of Commons postmark; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I am advised that it is not practicable for mail posted in the parliamentary outbuildings to be brought into the House of Commons in order to receive a House of Commons postmark.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Lord Privy Seal how many items of mail were handled *(a)* inwards and *(b)* outwards by the House of Commons Post Office; and what information he has as to the amount of mail originating in parliamentary outbuildings used by the House of Commons taken direct to other offices in London SW, in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Biffen: *(a)* Approximately 5 million items of inward mail are delivered to the House of Commons annually and are handled by the House of Commons Post Office.

(b) Approximately 3·5 million outward items, all posted within the Palace of Westminster, are handled by the House of Commons Post Office annually.

(c) Approximately 2 million items of outward mail in the Palace outbuildings are cleared direct to the south-west mechanised letter office at Nine Elms annually. Figures for each of the last three years could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Futures Markets (United States Taxpayers)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has made to the United States of America against its discriminatory taxation of gains made by United States taxpayers on British futures markets.

Mr. Howard: Following written representations in June 1985, I pressed this matter with the United States Treasury when I visited Washington in November. I shall continue to urge on all concerned in the United States that the discrimination is incompatible with a commitment to fair competition within a free market structure.

Visual Display Units

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what date his Department was first notified of the specific security risk created by electromagnetic radiation from visual display units and arising from the specific interception and analytical methods described in the report mentioned in his answer to the hon. Member for Hammersmith of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *356*.

Mr. Butcher: The potential security risk created by electromagnetic radiation from visual display and other units has been known and accepted for many years. In 1980 and 1981 an enhanced programme to extend protection was proposed and approved. This is being implemented where appropriate.

Grants

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list all specific type grants paid by his Department to local authorities, showing the size of each grant, which were hypothecated to any individual service or services, or where local authorities had to bid for specific grants.

Mr. Butcher: Grants are not paid by my Department to local authorities for them to carry out any specific services. Local authorities are eligible to apply for support under the business improvement services scheme but details of grants actually paid are not readily available.

RTM 322-01 Helicopter Engine

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he anticipates the RTM 322-01 helicopter engine currently under joint development with Rolls-Royce and Turbomeca will be tested in the commercial version of the Sikorsky Black Hawk helicopter.

Mr. Butcher: This is a matter for Rolls-Royce; but I understand that the company expects to start testing in June or July this year.

Obscene Telephone Calls

Mr. Bright asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation to establish safeguards to prevent subscribers to the telephone network making calls to numbers abroad which carry sexually explicit or obscene messages.

Mr. Butcher: No. I understand that it would not be technically feasible to bar subscribers' access to individual overseas telephone numbers. I am writing to my hon. Friend.

Information Technology

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consideration has been given by his Department to the potential impact on the Alvey

programme and other commercial programmes in information technology of the diversion of resources to strategic defence initiative contracts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: When research is at the fundamental and basic stage, there may well be some overlap between civil and defence technologies. This is in the nature of generic advanced technology; but it does mean that there are civil benefits from defence research and development. The Government recognise the need to maintain a balance between resources deployed to civil research and those deployed to defence work—of which strategic defence research is one component. However, it is still very early in the strategic defence programme and the Government is keeping the situation identified by my hon. Friend under close review.

Businesses (Insurance)

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation to provide direct assistance to businesses in the inner cities by subsidising insurance premiums down to the rates that equivalent businesses would expect to pay elsewhere in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No.

United States Re-export Licences

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether his Department is continuing to assist in the procurement of United States re-export licences for United Kingdom exports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The United Kingdom Government object as a matter of principle to United States extra-territorial claims to jurisdiction over certain re-exports from the United Kingdom and this Department will continue to give whatever assistance is appropriate to United Kingdom firms whose legitimate trading is affected by such claims.

Liquidations (West Midlands)

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many firms in *(a)* the west midlands and *(b)* the black country area of the west midlands have gone into liquidation since May 1979; and what was the percentage change over the seven years prior to May 1979 in the two areas, respectively.

Mr. Howard: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Sexual Offences (Private Prosecutions)

52. **Mr. Dickens** asked the Attorney-General if he will make it his policy to take over any private prosecutions initiated for sexual offences against children if the police have at first decided not to prosecute on the grounds that the only prosecution witness would be the child concerned.

The Attorney-General: The policy of the Director of Public Prosecutions with regard to taking over private prosecutions is set out in the answer given by my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), on 28 October 1985 at column 297. The Director will not take over and continue any prosecution unless he is satisfied as to the sufficiency of the evidence to support the charge preferred.

Legal Aid

53. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Attorney-General what recent representations he has received about the remuneration of barristers and solicitors for legal aid work.

The Attorney-General: The responsibility for remuneration of barristers and solicitors for legal aid work lies with the Lord Chancellor. He and I have received a number of representations on this subject.

Civil Court Cases (Wales and Chester)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Attorney-General what factors are causing delays in the hearing of cases in civil courts on the Wales and Chester circuits.

The Attorney-General: I am not aware of any special factors causing delays on the Wales and Chester circuit as a whole. If the hon. Member has a particular case or court in mind I would ask him to draw it to the attention of my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor so that inquiries can be made.

News International, Wapping

Mr. Leighton asked the Attorney-General (1) if he will institute proceedings for dangerous driving against the driver of the lorry, registration number 677 XPG, who, on the evening of 12 March at Wapping drove through a line of police into the audience of a public meeting causing injuries; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if the Director of Public Prosecutions will request a police report into offences arising from the circumstances in which, at Wapping on the evening of 12 March, a lorry was driven through a line of police and into a meeting being held there by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and the hon. Members for Newham, North East (Mr. Leighton), for Easington and for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott); and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I understand that the Metropolitan police are making inquiries into the incident to which the hon. Member refers. It is for the police to decide whether to prosecute the driver involved in the incident. They may seek advice either from the Metropolitan police solicitors department or the Director of Public Prosecutions, but the director will not be requiring the police to submit a report to him. I am not aware of any circumstances which require my intervention in this matter.

Alleged Sexual Offences (Private Prosecutions)

Mr. Dickens asked the Attorney-General if he will now prosecute Dr. Raymond Colin Birt in respect of sexual offences involving an eight-year-old girl in Chelmsford.

The Attorney-General: No. The file prepared by the Essex police was first considered by the county prosecuting solicitor who, having had the benefit of counsel, advised the chief constable that the evidence was

insufficient to justify the institution of criminal proceedings. Following an expression of intent by the mother of the child concerned to institute a private prosecution, the county prosecuting solicitor sought a second opinion from the Director of Public Prosecutions. He was also of the view that the evidence was insufficient and I agree with him.

Sexual Offences (Prosecution Policy)

Mr. Dickens asked the Attorney-General what is his policy on the prosecution of cases involving sexual offences when the victim is a child and no other witness is available to give evidence, although other corroborating evidence is available.

The Attorney-General: My guidelines as to the criteria for prosecution require the Director of Public Prosecutions to consider first whether the evidence is sufficient to afford a reasonable prospect of conviction; if he is so satisfied, he will then consider whether in the particular case the public interest requires the institution of criminal proceedings.

The first of these questions requires that he takes account of the factors referred to by the hon. Member.

A requirement of corroboration may arise in one of three ways. First, there are certain classes of offence (including offences under sections 2, 3 and 4 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956) for which corroboration is required by statute; secondly, section 38 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1938 (which renders admissible the unsworn evidence of a child of tender years) imposes an identical requirement whatever the nature of the alleged offence; thirdly, there is a rule of practice at common law requiring that juries be warned that it is dangerous to convict on the uncorroborated evidence of witnesses who fall into certain categories—one of which is children even where the evidence is sworn. In each case the test applicable to determine the nature and extent of the corroboration required is the same.

The Court of Appeal has held that to constitute corroboration evidence

"must be independent testimony which affects the accused by connecting or tending to connect him with the crime. In other words, it must be evidence which implicates him, that is, which confirms in some material particular not only the evidence that the crime has been committed but also that the defendant committed it."

Where the Director is satisfied as to the sufficiency of the evidence he will, in assessing the public interest, ordinarily take a serious view of offences involving sexual assaults on children.

Mr. Dickens asked the Attorney-General how many cases the Director of Public Prosecutions has considered in each of the last five years of allegations of sexual offences against children; and in how many such cases he has decided not to prosecute on the grounds that no prosecution witness would be available other than the child concerned.

The Attorney-General: The Departmental records maintained by the Director do not include the reasons for decisions to prosecute or not to prosecute in respect of any class of case. The information sought by the hon. Member could be obtained only by individual scrutiny of every file dealt with by the Director of Public Prosecutions during the relevant period which included an allegation of a sexual offence against a child. In view of the number of such files this exercise would result in disproportionate expense for the taxpayer.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Departmental Policies

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the objectives of his Department's policies for the rest of this Parliament.

Mr. Fowler: Considerable developments and improvements have already taken place in the fields of social security, health and personal social services during the lifetime of this Parliament. The Government are committing over 35 per cent. more in real terms to spending on social security in 1985-86 than in 1978-79, and we are seeking to ensure that those extra resources are used to the best advantage of beneficiaries. My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, recently made reference to some of the major achievements of my Department in her reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) on 24 February at columns *400-404*. Our present plans seek to build on those achievements.

Legislation is now before the House to give effect to the major proposals for improving the social security system, put forward in the White Paper "Reform of Social Security: Programme for Action". The main objectives of the Bill are to give new rights and new opportunities in pension provision and to enable many more people to build up their own pensions; to ensure that more help is directed where it is most needed, in particular for low income families with children both in work and out of work, to improve incentives by substantially reducing the unemployment trap and eliminating the worst effects of the poverty trap; and to create a simpler social security structure that is easier for staff to administer and for the public to understand. Hand in hand with these reforms, which will be phased in during 1987 and 1988, we are building a more modern framework for delivering benefits with one of the most ambitious computer strategies ever undertaken in this country. In 1988 three major computer projects will begin the start of a transformation in the delivery of social security services both for staff and the public.

In addition, the Government remain committed to maintaining the real value of the basic state retirement pension. We have also started a major new survey to secure more comprehensive and up-to-date information about the numbers, circumstances and needs of disabled people. The full results of the survey are expected to be published in 1988, and will provide the evidence needed for a review of provision for sick and disabled people.

We expect to see continued development in the all round performance of the health service which in 1984 succeeded in treating more patients than ever before in history. All regional and district health authorities have appointed general managers; we intend that they should concentrate on securing the highest quantity and quality of patient care from resources available. Spending on the service is already at a record real level, and is set to increase still further over the next three years to a total of £17 billion in 1988-89 in England alone. Capital investment levels in the National Health Service estate will be maintained and modernisation of the building stock will

continue. We are currently committing over £1,000 million to 147 major hospital projects under planning, design or construction. High priority will be given to the rationalisation of the estate, with consequent benefits of reduced running costs and increased income from land sales which will be used for the improvement of services to patients.

The Government will introduce legislation shortly to remove Crown immunity from hospital catering by making health authorities subject to the provisions of the Food Act 1984.

Priority is being given to the improvement of renal services and to improving cervical cancer screening programmes. Controlling the spread of acquired immune deficiency syndrome is also a major objective. We will continue to emphasise the need for improvements in the general health of the population, and to promote debate on and improvements in the field of primary health care. We expect to publish a consultation document on this important topic shortly.

We will continue with our campaign of education and information on drug misuse and with the improvement of treatment and rehabilitation services.

Turning to the personal social services, an important challenge is the need to develop community care services for people whose needs can be met outside hospital, and also to support their families and others who care for them. We shall continue to encourage local authorities to improve the management, allocation and delivery of the services they provide, and to assist voluntary organisations to extend the range and enhance the quality of their contributions. We shall be developing, with health and local authorities, systems of joint planning, vital to the successful growth of community care.

The efforts of local authorities to secure more effective use of the resources available for the personal social services are being assisted by my Department's social services inspectorate. The inspectorate's work programme, agreed annually with the local authority associations, includes the inspection of home help services, community services for mentally ill people, and social services for the care of children at risk of abuse. We are giving priority to the issue of guidance to help local authorities with the problem of child abuse, and undertaking a major review of child care law.

Departmental Office, Bloomsbury

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many items of outstanding post are awaiting action at the Bloomsbury local Department of Health and Social Security office, Tavistock square; and how long, on average, they have been outstanding.

Mr. Major: On 11 March 1986, there were 2,443 items of unlinked post outstanding of which 2,198 were over two days old. Only 33 of the total number of outstanding items were new or repeat claims to supplementary benefit. Records are not kept of how long, on average, items of post are outstanding.

Imported Medicines (Recall Procedure)

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the efficacy to date of recall procedures for parallel imported medicines dispensed in the United Kingdom in the event of a product problem arising.

Mr. Hayhoe: I am not aware of any recall of a parallel imported medicinal product, therefore there is no basis on which to provide the assessment sought.

If it is found necessary to recall a product it is the responsibility of the licence holder to arrange this and the records kept by product licence holders and wholesale dealers' licence holders must be adequate for this purpose.

Deficiencies in those records could lead to the suspension or revocation of wholesale dealers' or product licences.

Irradiated Food

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action will be taken against the Imperial Group of companies or its subsidiaries over the importation of irradiated prawns into Britain in April 1985; and what action he will take to prevent further importing of irradiated foods.

Mr. Whitney: Responsibility for enforcement of the Food (Control of Irradiation) Regulations 1967 as amended, which prohibit the importation and marketing of irradiated foods intended for sale for human consumption, is vested in port health and local authorities. Dover port health authority may be the relevant authority in this case and is investigating the allegation made. The extent to which controls are needed on the importation of irradiated foods will be reviewed by Ministers in the light of the "Report on the Safety and Wholesomeness of Irradiated Foods", which is to be published soon, and of the comments received on it.

Park Lane Hospital

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if there are any limitations on the number of rehabilitative days out for patients detained at Park lane hospital; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to increase the level of resources available for rehabilitation at Park lane hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Visits outside the hospital for purposes of rehabilitation, either with a group of other patients or individually, are matters for decision by the responsible medical officer, in consultation with other members of the clinical team. At Park lane hospital, outside visits by patients subject to restriction orders who have the Home Secretary's approval for absence from the hospital, are subject to the overall control of the hospital's leave of absence committee, which takes account of clinical and security considerations and any other relevant matters.

As with all other aspects of the hospital's work, arrangements for outside visits, which frequently require escorting staff, must be made within the total volume of resources allocated to the hospital. We have ensured that Park lane hospital is well provided with resources. No increases are planned for this specific purpose.

Supplementary Benefit

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Dulwich are on supplementary benefit.

Mr. Major: Dulwich is covered, for social security purposes, by four offices of the Department but their boundaries are not conterminous with those of the constituency. The table shows the number of people receiving supplementary benefit on 11 February 1986—the latest figures available—from each of those offices.

	Number
Brixton	12,072
Camberwell	12,420
Crystal Palace	11,687
Peckham	10,081
Total	46,260

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were *(a)* the total numbers of single payments and *(b)* the total amounts paid under the supplementary benefit regulations for each social security office in Scotland in 1985.

Mr. Major: I regret that no information is available about the total amount of supplementary benefit paid out by individual local offices. Such information could be obtained only by a special exercise which would be disproportionately expensive. Tables showing the numbers of single payments awarded, and the amounts paid out, by each of the Department's local offices during the year ended 9 April 1985 are in the Library.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people of working age in *(a)* the west midlands and *(b)* the Walsall area are now receiving supplementary benefit; what were the figures in May 1979; and if he will give the percentage change in the two areas, respectively.

Mr. Major: The table shows the number of people of working age in *(a)* the west midlands and *(b)* the Walsall area who were receiving supplementary benefit at 11 February 1986—the latest available figures—and 15 May 1979; and the percentage change in the two areas:

	15 May 1979	*11 February 1986*	*Percentage change*
West Midlands	126,331	371,683	194
Walsall area	6,381	20,744	225

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Medicines

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many medicines outside the selected list of drugs have had their prices lowered to fall beneath the prescription charge, since the list was enacted.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not readily available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

AIDS

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimates have been made by his Department as to the increase in the number of cases of people suffering from acquired immune deficiency syndrome during the next three years; and what total costs have been incurred by the National Health Service in treating patients suffering from acquired immune deficiency syndrome since 1982.

Mr. Hayhoe: For estimates of the increase in the number of cases of people suffering from acquired immune deficiency syndrome, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 13 January at column *494*. I regret that the cost information requested is not available centrally.

Claimants (Entitlement)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of cases relating to his Department's assessments of claiments' entitlements which have been brought to the attention of the Ombudsman in each year since 1979.

Mr. Major: An individual's entitlement to benefit is determined by independent adjudicating authorities whose decisions are not within the remit of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration.

The number of complaints of maladministration which related to Social Security matters and which were accepted for investigation by the PCA in the years 1979-1985, were as follows:

Number of complaints in respect of	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Supplementary Benefits administration	20	30	55	50	27	42	44
Other Social Security Benefit matters	55	54	34	38	21	21	37
Total	75	84	89	88	48	63	81

Hospitals (Support Facilities)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many bills have been submitted by local authorities to his Department in each year since 1979 for social services support facilities to hospitals; what these bills amounted to each year during the same period; and if he will give a breakdown of the kinds of services each local authority claimed to have provided.

Mr. Whitney: Since the 1974 reorganisation of the National Health Service, local authorities have supplied the services of social workers to hospitals free of charge, in line with the recommendations of the working party on collaboration. In the same way health authorities supply certain services to local authorities without payment. No bills for hospital social workers have therefore been received. One local authority has however recently written to my right hon. Friend seeking his agreement, under

Section 28(4) of the National Health Service Act 1977, to begin charging four health authorities for the services of hospital social workers.

The matter is under consideration.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the average daily number of patients, since 1 January, who have had hospital treatment cancelled on the advice of the chief ambulance officer of the London ambulance service, or his divisional ambulance officers, because of the non-availability of ambulances;

(2) how many patients had hospital treatment cancelled on Monday 10 February because of the non-availability of ambulances;

(3) what is the impact on the provision of ambulance services in London for patients requiring urgent treatment of the provision of ambulances for patients receiving non-emergency treatment at day hospitals; and what relative priorities are accorded to these two categories of ambulance journey.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks as it is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the South-West Thames regional health authority, which manages the London Ambulance Service on behalf of the Thames regions, for this information.

Overseas Pensioners

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the countries with which Britain has agreements to provide cost of living increases to British pensioners who reside there.

Mr. Major: Pensions are payable at the same rates as in the United Kingdom to pensioners in European Community States, and under reciprocal agreements to pensioners in the following countries:

Austria	Malta
Cyprus	Mauritius
Finland	Sark
Iceland	Switzerland
Israel	Turkey
Jersey	Yugoslavia
Guernsey	

Pensioners in a further group of countries receive the increases which become payable after the date an agreement entered into force:

Bermuda, from 1 November 1969
Jamaica, from 1 October 1972
United States of America, from 25 September 1969

Wandsworth Health Authority (Nurse Accommodation)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many properties owned by the Wandsworth health authority are let to nurses working in the authority area.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish therefore to contact the chairman of the Wandsworth health authority for this information.

Old Persons (Heating)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what standard room temperatures have been recommended by his Department for old people in each season each year since 1979.

Mr. Whitney: The Department's design guidance for newly built local authority residential homes for elderly people issued in 1973 advised that space heating requirements should be calculated on the basis that a temperature of 70 deg. F (21 deg. C) should be maintained during the day in residents' sitting rooms and bed sitting rooms when the outside temperature is 30 deg. F (1 deg. C). Apart from this, there are no recommendations by the Department on standard room temperatures. Our view now is that individual requirements and preferences vary markedly and it would not be possible to specify a particular temperature that would be appropriate in all circumstances.

Health Authorities

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now announce details of the appointment and reappointment of chairmen of district health authorities from 1 April.

Mr. Hayhoe: District health authorities were established in 1982 as part of the reorganisation of the health service. Chairmen of these authorities were appointed for a four-year term. Following a number of vacancies in the interim, the terms of office of 170 chairmen expire on 31 March 1986.

In considering appointments and reappointments an important aim has been to bring in younger people as chairmen and to build on the improvements that have been made in the NHS in recent years, by appointing individuals with good management experience.

The process of considering the appointments has now been completed. 108 of the present chairmen are being reappointed. Of those chairmen who are retiring, a half are aged 65 or over, while a third resigned or indicated they did not wish to be reconsidered. The average age of the new chairmen now being appointed is 54—compared with 62, the average age of retiring chairmen. 18 of the new chairmen are already members of regional or district health authorities.

On this occasion some chairmen are being offered a two-year appointment instead of four to ensure that in future the reappointment exercise is phased. There is no significance between a two or four year term and all chairmen will be eligible for four year appointments in 1988.

Chairmen play a vital part in providing leadership to health authorities and in translating national policies into local action. My right hon. Friend and I are very grateful to all of them for their hard work and dedication over the past four years. I have placed a list of the new chairmen and their terms of office in the Library.

Sick Pay

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of successful appeals against refusal to pay statutory sick pay in each year from 1983 to 1985; and how many appeals against refusal to pay

statutory sick pay were received by his Department in each year from 1983 to 1985 for the county of Leicestershire and the city of Leicester, respectively.

Mr. Major: Information about appeals to social security appeal tribunals on statutory sick pay questions was first collected from 1 April 1984. The information collected does not indicate whether the appellant is an employee or employer and figures are not available for localities smaller than a social security region. The available information is shown in the table.

Appeals to social security appeal tribunals on statutory sick pay question

Year	Number of appeals lodged*	Number of appeals heard and decided	Number of appeals decided in appellant's favour
1984 (April to December)	73	51	13
1985 (January to March)	25	10	5

A special count in the four local offices in the city of Leicester indicates that in 1984 only one appeal on a statutory sick pay question was lodged and in 1985 three appeals were lodged although only one was heard and decided in that year.

* Appeals lodged will include those lodged in the period plus those outstanding from an earlier period.

Health Care (Hampstead)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the expenditure on primary health care in the Hampstead health authority in the last three years; and what has been the average for district health authorities in England over the same period.

Mr. Hayhoe: Following are the figures requested:

*Expenditure on primary health care**

	1982-83		1983-84		1984-85	
	Total	Per head of population	Total	Per head of population	Total	Per head of population
	£ million	£	£ million	£	£ million	£
Hampstead health authority	9·0	85	9·8	93	10·7	101
Average for district health authorities in England		71		76		83

* Current expenditure on community health services plus net expenditure on family practitioner services. The latter expenditure cannot strictly be attributed to particular districts but has been included (pro-rata to population) from the annual accounts of the family practitioner committees which account for it.

Departmental Staffing Levels

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the level of staffing and speed of response to public inquiries at his Department's office in Melton street, London NW1.

Mr. Major: A further 5,000 staff for DHSS local offices was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services on 7 March 1986. This very substantial increase, of which the Melton street office will receive an appropriate share, will ensure adequate levels of service throughout the coming financial year.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer of 7 March, *Official Report*, column 322, how many of the extra local office staff referred to will be added to those already employed at the Melton street office NW1, and the Cricklewood office, NW2 of his Department.

Mr. Major: The method of distributing the extra local office staff has still to be decided. It is not possible at this stage to say how many extra staff individual local offices will receive.

Nurses' Accommodation

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has yet received any proposals from Leeds western district health authority to close the nurses' home at Chapel Allerton hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Leeds western's proposals, which are currently under consideration in the Department, envisage a substantial reduction in the number of units of accommodation provided in the district, but do not specify which are to be closed to achieve this reduction. The authority has been asked to send the hon. Member details.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what criteria he applies when deciding to approve the sale of National Health Service property currently used as accommodation for nurses.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on 12 March at columns *526-27*.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will take steps to include generic soluble paracetamol on the restricted list of drugs available on National Health Service prescription; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if, where a general practitioner prescribes a generic soluble paracetamol, the chemist is entitled to a reimbursement from National Health Service funds;

(3) if he will ask the review committee on the limited list to consider a generic soluble paracetamol for inclusion in the limited list; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what considerations have guided him in deciding which soluble paracetamol preparations *(a)* are and *(b)* are not included within the selected list of drugs prescribed at National Health expense.

Mr. Hayhoe: Since the introduction of the selected list scheme, two strengths of liquid paracetamol have remained prescribable by generic name and reimbursable on the National Health Service: Paracetamol Elixir Paediatric 120mg/5ml and Paracetamol Mixture 250mg/5ml. The advisory committee on National Health Service drugs, which gives independent expert advice on the preparations which should be available on NHS prescription, has reviewed liquid paracetamol preparations and endorsed the retention of the two drugs mentioned above.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much has so far been paid out for the current winter arising from the authorisation of the exceptionally severe weather payments in some areas.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 24 February at column *470*.

Pensioners

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many pensioners there are now and how many there were in 1979.

Mr. Major: In November 1979 there were 8·6 million retirement pensioners in Great Britain. By September 1985, the latest figures available, this figure had risen to 9·2 million.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the total number of deaths resulting in whole or in part from drug abuse for each London borough for each year in which figures are available since the boroughs were created.

Mr. Whitney: The tables show the number of deaths from drug addiction (International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 7th revision 323, 8th and 9th revision 304) for usual residents of each London borough for 1965 to 1984, and the number of deaths from non-dependent abuse of drugs (excluding alcohol and tobacco) ICD (9) 305·2 to 305·9 (figures for which are not separately identifiable prior to 1979) for 1979 to 1984.

Number of deaths from Drug Abuse in the London Boroughs 1965-1978, persons, all ages

Area of usual residence London Borough	*Year* 1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
City of London	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Barking	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—
Barnet	—	—	—	2	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Bexley	—	—	—	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	2	2	1	1
Brent	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	2	—	2	2
Bromley	—	—	2	—	1	1	1	—	—	1	2	—	3	—
Camden	1	1	—	—	2	1	2	3	—	6	4	2	5	5
Croydon	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	1	2	—	—	1	1	6
Ealing	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	2	3	3
Enfield	—	1	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	1
Greenwich	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Hackney	—	1	—	1	3	—	2	—	1	—	2	2	3	4
Hammersmith	—	—	2	1	3	3	—	5	1	4	5	2	3	7
Haringey	—	—	—	1	2	—	1	1	—	—	—	1	—	2
Harrow	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—
Havering	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Hillingdon	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	1	2	1	—	—	2
Hounslow	—	—	—	—	2	1	1	2	1	—	1	—	1	—
Islington	—	1	2	—	—	—	1	2	1	1	2	2	—	2
Kensington and Chelsea	1	2	2	5	6	6	4	6	6	9	8	8	7	6
Kingston upon Thames	1	—	1	—	3	—	—	1	2	—	1	1	—	2
Lambeth	2	1	2	1	—	—	2	2	3	2	6	5	3	5
Lewisham	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	3	1	1	—	1	1
Merton	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1
Newham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Redbridge	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	—	1	—	—	—
Richmond upon Thames	—	—	—	1	1	2	1	1	2	—	2	—	3	3
Southwark	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	3	3	2	1	1	2
Sutton	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Tower Hamlets	2	—	—	1	1	—	1	—	1	1	—	2	2	—
Waltham Forest	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wandsworth	—	—	1	2	3	1	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2
Westminster, City of	1	4	—	1	4	3	8	9	6	7	8	6	7	5

Number of deaths from drug abuse in the London Boroughs 1979-84, persons of all ages

Area of usual residence London borough	Year											
	1979		1980		1981		1982		1983		1984	
	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)
City of London	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Barking	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	3	—
Barnet	2	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	1	—	—	—
Bexley	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Brent	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	2	1	—	—
Bromley	1	—	4	—	2	—	—	—	2	—	3	—
Camden	1	—	5	—	5	—	9	1	7	—	5	—
Croydon	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—
Ealing	—	—	5	—	—	—	2	—	1	—	—	—
Enfield	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—
Greenwich	1	—	1	1	—	—	2	—	1	—	—	—
Hackney	1	—	7	—	2	—	7	1	1	—	1	1
Hammersmith	4	—	2	1	1	—	2	1	2	—	1	—
Haringey	1	—	2	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Harrow	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Havering	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hillingdon	1	—	5	—	1	—	3	—	1	—	—	—
Hounslow	2	—	2	1	—	—	1	—	1	—	1	—
Islington	4	—	6	—	1	—	4	2	3	—	3	—
Kensington and Chelsea	4	—	4	—	4	—	8	—	5	—	3	1
Kingston upon Thames	1	—	—	—	1	—	2	—	1	—	—	—
Lambeth	4	—	2	—	7	—	12	1	8	—	5	—
Lewisham	—	—	1	—	1	—	5	—	—	—	2	—
Merton	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	2	—
Newham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—
Redbridge	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Richmond upon Thames	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—
Southwark	4	—	2	—	5	—	2	—	4	—	2	1
Sutton	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Tower Hamlets	—	—	2	—	—	—	3	—	1	—	3	—
Waltham Forest	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	1	—
Wandsworth	6	—	2	—	—	—	2	—	4	—	6	2
Westminster, City of	5	—	3	—	1	—	11	1	9	—	10	1

(a) ICD(9) 304 Drug dependence.
(b) ICD(9) 305·2-305·9 Non-dependent abuse of drugs (excluding alcohol and tobacco).

Hospitals (Essex)

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the date on which he expects the formal consultation procedure on the closure of South Ockendon hospital to commence and to be completed;

(2) how many patients from South Ockendon hospital have been transferred to private residential homes or to board and lodging houses since 1984;

(3) what arrangements have been made for the supervision of patients transferred from South Ockendon hospital into private residential homes or into board and lodging houses since 1984; and if he will make a statement;

(4) how many urgent transfers of maternity cases from Orsett hospital to Basildon hospital have taken place in each year since 1982; and how this compares with the national average.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the district health authority for the information she requires.

Residential Care

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the recommendations which bear on his responsibilities put forward in the National Council for Voluntary Organisations report "Crisis in Residential Care", a copy of which has been forwarded to him.

Mr. Newton: I expect to meet representatives from the National Council of Voluntary Organisations on 19 March to discuss the recommendations made in their report. The relevant recommendations and any further representations they may make will be considered in the context of the current review of the supplementary benefits limits for people in residential care and nursing homes, and will also be taken into account by the working party with the local authority associations announced in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) on 28 January at column *501*.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the limits on assistance towards living costs payable to people in private board and lodgings by his Department; and what are the limits on allowances payable to elderly and disabled people for private residential or nursing care.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to schedule 1 of the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions (No. 2) Regulations 1985 (SI 1985 No. 1835) for the maximum supplementary benefit amounts payable to people in residential care homes, nursing homes and hostels, and to the HMSO publication "Supplementary Benefit Maximum Amounts, Initial Periods and Board and Lodging Areas", a copy of which is in the Library, for information relating to ordinary board and lodging accommodation. The limits for ordinary board and lodging and hostels can be extended by

up to £17·30 in certain individual cases, for example where a claimant is elderly or physically or mentally infirm.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what studies are conducted by his Department of rates which private landlords and owners of residential homes charge for young claimants of supplementary benefits and elderly people, respectively.

Mr. Newton: A study by management consultants on costs and charges in residential care and nursing homes is expected to be completed later in the spring. Longer-term research covering this area is being undertaken by academic units at the Universities of York and Kent. As part of the current review of limits, the Department is also looking at charges for all types of boarder accommodation.

Unemployment Benefit and Pensions

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the latest information available on the percentage of gross average earnings, unemployment benefit and the basic state pension each represents in the United Kingdom; and how this compares to each of the other members of the European Economic Community and the Scandinavian countries.

Mr. Major: The basic rates of retirement pension and unemployment benefit for a married couple introduced in November 1985 were at that date 36 per cent. and 29 per cent. respectively of the average weekly gross earnings of adult male manual workers in Great Britain. Information on the level of benefit in other countries is given in the Department's publications "Tables of Social Benefit Systems in the Member States of the European Communities" and "Comparative Tables of the Social Security Systems in Council of Europe member states not belonging to the European Communities", available in the Library. Information is not available for reliable comparisons with gross average earnings in the relevant countries.

Health Care and Social Security

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will list the latest figures for the amount of social protection (health care and social security) expenditure as a percentage of the gross domestic product in the United Kingdom and other members of the European Economic Community, on the same basis as his reply of 19 November 1984 to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) *Official Report*, column 63.

Mr. Major: Using the definition of "social protection" described in the "European system of integrated social protection statistics: Methodology — Part I" (Eurostat, 1981), which includes employers' sick pay and private pension schemes, social protection expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product in 1982 was as follows:

	Per cent.
Netherlands	33·3
Belgium	30·5
Denmark	30·3
Federal Republic of Germany	29·8
Luxembourg	28·9
France	28·5
Irish Republic	23·9
United Kingdom	23·6
Greece	19·0

Information for other members of the European Community and for later years is not yet available.

Low Income Families

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to update in the Official Report the information on the income level of poorer households provided in his reply of 24 October 1983 to the hon. Member for Dundee West (Mr. Wilson) *Official Report*, column 51, as soon as the 1983 low income families tables are placed in the Library.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have the information as soon as the tables are placed in the Library.

Dewsbury DHA

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he is satisfied with the discharge of its functions by the Dewsbury district health authority;

(2) for what reasons the services of Mr. Sam Lyles as chairman of the Dewsbury district health authority are being terminated.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the annual gross revenue from National Health Service prescription charges in the calendar year 1985.

Mr. Hayhoe: The income from prescription charges collected in 1985 for drugs dispensed by the family practitioner services, in England, is estimated to be £130 million. Information in respect of prescription charges collected in the health and community health services is not available centrally in respect of 1985.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the total annual administration costs associated with prescription charges during the calendar year 1985.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not available.

General Hospital Birkenhead (Sale)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will detail the price gained from the sale of the general hospital site in Birkenhead.

Mr. Hayhoe: £46,000, which I understand was in accordance with the district valuer's valuation.

Civil Defence

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what joint plans have been agreed by the Government for the services of doctors, nurses or other

National Health Service staff to be made available in the United Kingdom to support foreign military forces involved in the reinforcement of Europe if this became necessary during grave national tension;

(2) what joint plans have been agreed by the Government for hospitals and other National Health Service facilities, properties, supplies or equipment to be made available in the United Kingdom to support foreign military forces involved in the reinforcement of Europe if this became necessary during grave national tension.

Mr. Whitney: The Government are making contingency plans for the best use of all National Health Service resources in an emergency and these will cover the treatment in United Kingdom hospitals of both British and other NATO military casualties. Plans will be incorporated in those for the National Health Service as a whole in time of crisis or war, and are part of a continuous process. In addition the United States is establishing its own contingency hospitals which will be activated in a crisis; these will be equipped, manned and financed by the United States' Government and will reduce the burden on the National Health Service. Detailed planning is classified.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, by each office of his Department, and housing authority, the total amounts of housing benefit owing by way of arrears as of 1 January.

Mr. Major: This information is not available centrally. Local authorities are responsible for administering the housing benefits scheme and where possible should determine a claim for benefit within 14 days of receiving the information required to calculate entitlement. If the hon. Member would like to know the position in any particular authority he should contact that authority direct.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide a breakdown of the number of family income supplement recipients according to the 16 occupational categories since 1981.

Mr. Newton: The information is:

Occupation	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Agricultural	10	12	13	12	12
Industry (heavy)	3	4	5	5	5
Industry (light)	10	14	18	18	17
Craftsmen	2	4	5	5	4
Textile and clothing	4	6	7	6	6
Food and drink trades	3	4	5	5	5
Construction and building	4	6	8	7	7
General unskilled, warehousemen and packers	15	21	27	30	27
Drivers, transport and communications	10	14	17	16	17
Clerical and office	14	18	20	21	21
Shop assistants and sales	11	15	18	18	18
Catering, domestic and cleaners	21	26	31	32	32
Service, sport and recreation	4	7	8	7	7
Nurses	2	2	3	2	2
Administrators, social, professional and technical	8	12	14	14	15
Others	1	1	2	3	4
Total*	121,000	166,000	202,000	203,000	199,000

* Because of rounding, totals may differ from addition of individual items.

Rent Arrears

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many recipients of housing benefit, by housing authority area, were in rent arrears on 1 January as a result of non-payment by his Department of moneys due to the housing authority.

Mr. Major: The Department makes monthly payments on account to local authorities to enable them to award benefit under the housing benefits scheme. The authorities estimate the sums they will need to spend at the start of each financial year and can submit a revised claim for subsidy if necessary during the year. There is no reason therefore why authorities should not have adequate funds to award rent rebates to those tenants entitled to benefit.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many applicants for mobility allowance have had to wait for longer than six months for any payment to be made in each of the last five years; and what is the average waiting time for payment of mobility allowance.

Mr. Newton: I regret that a record is not kept of the number of claims where it takes longer than six months to pay mobility allowance. Virtually all claims are decided initially by the adjudicating officer on the basis of a report by an examining medical practitioner. The average time taken for a claimant who is successful at this stage to receive payment is currently nine and a half weeks.

Industrial Injuries

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what comments he has received from the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council about his Department's consultation paper on the industrial injuries scheme; when those comments will be published; what

other organisations and individuals have submitted comments to him on the consultation paper; and what views they expressed on it.

Mr. Newton: Copies of the council's response were placed in the Library on 12 March. Their main comments were that the scheme should continue to compensate all levels of industrial disablement and that major policy decisions should be deferred until the results of the OPCS survey of disabled people were known.

The following organisations submitted comments, as well as about 40 individuals:

Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers
Borough of Stockport
British Medical Association
Confederation of British Industry
Confederation of Health Service Employees
Dairy Trade Federation
Disability Alliance
Disablement Income Group
Engineering Employers Federation
General Municipal Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union
Leicester City Council
National and Local Government Officers Association
Policy Studies Institute
Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation
Royal College of Physicians
Trades Union Congress
Union of Democratic Mineworkers

All respondents welcomed the proposals to extend the scheme to cover accidents abroad and to abolish unemployability supplement. The majority favoured the indexation of awards of special hardship allowance and the payment of the allowance at all levels of disablement. Most respondents did not support the proposals relating to constant attendance allowance, gratuities for disablement below 15 per cent., the aligning of national insurance and industrial injuries widow's provisions, and special hardship allowance for those over national insurance pension age. Views for and against the ending of hospital treatment allowance were fairly evenly balanced.

ENVIRONMENT

British Nuclear Fuels plc

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement giving the characteristics, constituent components and radio-activity in terms of total activity, concentration and inclusion of particulate matter, fission products, actinides, and fissile products and plutonium contained within the matter, discharged from Sellafield on 23 January, together with the total volume of the discharge, the rates of the discharge, and the times and duration of the discharge.

Mr. Waldegrave: On 23 January, 1,466m³ of low active liquid waste was discharged between 1230 hours and 1630 hours, at a rate of about 400m³ per hour. That discharge included the additional arisings from the malfunction in the uranium finishing plant. The total activity of material from that plant amounted to 9 GBq corresponding to the purified uranium present which contained only trace quantities of fission products and plutonium. The U-235 fissile content of the uranium was 0·4 per cent., ie less than natural level. The uranium was present in the form of ammonium diuranate associated with ferric hydroxide as solids in suspension, and to the extent of 300 ppm by weight.

House of Commons (Static Electricity)

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had, or will have, with the officials of the House responsible for the safety of those working in the House about the safety implications of excessive static electricity within the bounds of the House.

Sir George Young: The atmosphere in the House can become highly charged for a number of reasons. Although sparks may fly on occasions, there appears to be no firm evidence that the discomfort or shock caused by such discharges of energy constitute a danger to health. Indeed, I have noticed a stimulant effect in some cases.

Local Government Finance

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the figures for corporation tax, corporation tax (excluding receipts on North sea operations), and for industrial, commercial and public utilities' rates which underlie figure 7 on page 12 of Cmnd. 9714.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The figures are as follows:

£ '000m

Year	*Corporation tax (United Kingdom)*	*Corporation tax (excluding North Sea) (United Kingdom)*	*Industrial, commercial and public utilities' rates (Great Britain)*
1975-76	2·0	2·0	1·8
1976-77	2·7	2·7	1·9
1977-78	3·3	3·3	2·2
1978-79	3·9	3·8	2·7
1979-80	4·6	4·4	3·1
1980-81	4·6	4·3	4·0
1981-82	4·9	4·2	4·9
1982-83	5·7	5·2	5·5
1983-84	6·2	5·3	5·8
1984-85	8·3	5·9	6·2

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the aggregate Exchequer grant paid to local authorities at *(a)* rate support grant settlement and *(b)* estimated outturn in each year from 1979-80 to 1985-86, showing also the level of relevant expenditure in each case and also the grant percentage.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information is as follows:

Aggregate Exchequer grant, relevant expenditure and grant percentage

	Settlement			Latest supplementary report		
	Aggregate Exchequer Grant £ million	*Relevant Expenditure £ million*	*Grant Per cent.*	*Aggregate Exchequer Grant £ million*	*Relevant Expenditure £ million*	*Grant Per cent.*
England and Wales						
1979-80	*8,607	*14,109	61·0	†9,517	†16,364	58·2
1980-81	†9,600	†15,737	61·0	‡11,182	‡19,155	58·4
England						
1981-82	10,895	18,423	59·1	10,939	19,933	54·9
1982-83	11,484	20,463	56·1	11,242	21,765	51·7
1983-84	11,782	22,307	52·8	11,486	23,082	49·8
1984-85	11,872	22,883	51·9	11,902	23,872	49·9
1985-86	11,764	24,161	48·7	11,357	24,391	46·6
1986-87	11,764	25,328	46·4	n/a	n a	n/a

* At November 1978 prices.
† At November 1979 prices.
‡ At November 1980 prices.
n/a Not available.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the outturn or budgeted total of local authority revenue expenditure in each year from 1979-80 to 1985-86, showing how much of this total was funded by *(a)* non-domestic rates, *(b)* domestic rates, net of rebates, *(c)* rate rebates, *(d)* rate support grant, *(e)* specific and supplementary grants and *(f)* other income services.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The lastest available information based on returns from local authorities is as follows:

Local Authority Net Revenue Expenditure and Financing*

	England and Wales		*England*				
	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86‡*
Net Revenue expenditure	15,956	19,307	20,106	21,952	23,260	24,163	24,597
Rates† (net of rebates)	6,122	7,754	9,053	10,239	10,437	11,043	11,736
Rate Rebates‖	176	243	338	518	1,102	1,235	1,344
Rate Support Grant	7,870	9,417	9,035	9,013	9,119	8,873	8,848
Specific and Supp. Grants	1,480	1,775	1,930	2,215	2,446	2,851	2,603
Balances/Balancing item	308	118	−250	−33	156	161	66
Income to Finance Net Revenue expenditure	15,956	19,307	20,106	21,952	23,260	24,163	24,597

Notes:
* Net revenue expenditure is defined as expenditure to be financed from relevant grants, rates and balances and is net of non relevant specific grants and income from sales, fees and charges.

† Rates can be divided into domestic and non-domestic approximately, using rateable value shares. These are:

£ billion

	England and Wales		*England*				
	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Domestic	2·6	3·3	3·9	4·4	4·2	4·4	4·7
Non domestic	3·6	4·4	5·1	5·9	6·3	6·6	7·0

‡ Excluding the LRT levy.
‖ Including rate rebates paid in respect of supplementary benefit recipients under the housing benefit scheme which was partially

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the calculations behind the figures stated as being the average charge for water and sewage provision in England and Wales in chapter 8, paragraph 5 of the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government."

Mr. John Patten: The basic figures the hon. Member refers to are as follows:

	£.p.
A. *England and Wales*	
Average domestic rate bill	344·00
*Water supply	39·92
*Sewerage and environmental	45·93
B. *Scotland*	
Average domestic rate bill Public water, sewerage and coast protection, flood prevention and riverboard requisitions	365·97
Water Supply	26·23
C. *England*	

	£.p.
Average domestic rate bill	351·40
*Water supply	38·96
†Sewerage and environmental	45·60

* Average household bills in 1985-86 for unmeasured domestic consumers.
† English water authorities' areas.

Rates

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the total paid in domestic rates *(a)* gross and *(b)* net of rebates in each year from 1979-80 to 1985-86.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Estimates of domestic rates income in England are as follows:

£'000 million

	Domestic Rate Income (gross of rebates)	*Domestic Rate Income (Net of rebates)*
1979-80	2·6	2·5
1980-81	3·4	3·2
1981-82	4·2	3·9
1982-83	4·9	4·4
1983-84	5·3	4·2
1984-85	5·6	4·4
1985-86	6·1	4·8

Notes: The figures are net of domestic rate relief grant. The estimates are derived from total rate income allocated to the domestic sector on the basis of its rateable value share.

The rate rebate figures netted off include those paid in respect of supplementary benefit recipients under the housing benefit scheme, which was partially introduced in November 1982 and fully in April 1983. Equivalent sums paid to supplementary benefit recipients under previous arrangements are given in earlier years.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the total paid in non-domestic rates to local authorities in England in each year from 1979-80 to 1985-86.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Estimates of non-domestic rate income in England are as follows:

£'000 million

	Non-domestic rate income
1979-80	3·4
1980-81	4·2
1981-82	5·1
1982-83	5·9
1983-84	6·3
1984-85	6·6
1985-86	7·2

Note: The estimates are derived from total rate income allocated to the non-domestic sector on the basis of its rateable value share.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the level of domestic rates relief in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales in each of the past 10 years.

Mrs. Rumbold: Domestic rate relief in England has been 18·5p in the pound since 1975-76, except for four London boroughs (City of London, Camden, Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster) where it has varied. Domestic rate relief in Wales was 36p in the pound between 1975-76 and 1982-83 (inclusive), and 18·5p in the pound since 1983-84.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average unrebated domestic rates bill in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales in the year 1984-85, and in each of the previous 12 years.

Mrs. Rumbold: The figures for 1973-74 onwards are as follows. Figures for earlier years are not available on a comparable basis:

Average unrebated domestic rate bills (per hereditament) (£)

	England	*Wales*
1973-74	60	43
1974-75	77	34
1975-76	94	51
1976-77	103	59
1977-78	119	68
1978-79	131	77
1979-80	155	97
1980-81	199	127
1981-82	245	154
1982-83	282	183
1983-84	303	185
1984-85	323	202

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy, when negotiating the new agreement with the tobacco companies on advertising and sponsorship, to seek to exclude publicity of the type given on television to the Benson and Hedges brand name during the 1986 Benson and Hedges snooker championships at Wembley; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: I cannot be specific about the changes I will seek to the voluntary agreement on sports sponsorship; my forthcoming negotiations with the tobacco industry will be confidential. It is, however, clear that there is considerable concern about the amount of TV exposure tobacco companies receive through sports sponsorship. I expect this area to form a central part of the discussion.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's response to the Environment Committee's report on radioactive waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government welcome the report as an important contribution to the nuclear debate. We shall want to consider its recommendations carefully.

Teachers (Salaries)

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish details of the current cost to local authorities of paying teachers' salaries; and what proportion in percentage terms this represents of the total sum collected in rates.

Mrs. Rumbold: The estimated costs of paying teachers in England for 1985-86 are as follows, with the percentages which they represent of the total sum collected in rates:

	Pay Costs	Pay Costs as Per cent. of Rates
	£ million	
Primary and secondary teachers	5,300	44·4
Further education teachers	1,330	11·1

The figures include London weighting, national insurance and superannuation and are based on local authority returns which relate to their 1985-86 budgets. The figures take account of the 1985-86 pay round.

The pay cost of these teachers represents 30 per cent. of total expenditure which is financed by rates and block grant.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is yet in a position to say how many staff in his Department will be working wholly or partly on functions arising out of the Local Government Act 1985 and the implementation of the abolition of the metropolitan county councils and the Greater London council during the financial year 1986-87; what is the estimated cost for 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Much of the Department's work on functions affected by the Local Government Act 1985 will be handled by staff within the appropriate policy areas and will not be separately identifiable. A reduced central capacity will be retained to co-ordinate the implementation of the Act, but it is too early to give estimates of the numbers of staff likely to be involved through 1986-87.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many leaflets entitled the "New Structure of South Yorkshire Government from 1st April" have been produced; to whom they are to be distributed; and what is the total cost including the cost of preparation.

Mr. Tracey: My Department has produced and distributed to all households and business premises in south Yorkshire 500,000 copies of the leaflet "The New Structure of Goverment in South Yorkshire". The cost of printing was £8,387.

It is not possible to break down the costs of preparation and distribution as between the GLC and the metropolitan county areas. The total costs of preparation and distribution were £4,300 and £150,504, respectively.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many leaflets entitled the "New Structure of West Yorkshire's Government from 1st April" have been produced; to whom they are to be distributed; and what is the total cost including the cost of preparation.

Mr. Tracey: My Department has produced and distributed to all households and business premises in west Yorkshire 800,000 copies of the leaflet "The New Structure of Government in West Yorkshire". The cost of printing was £8,711.

It is not possible to break down the costs of preparation and distribution as between the GLC and the metropolitan county areas. The total costs of preparation and distribution were £4,300 and £150,504 respectively.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many leaflets entitled the "New Structure of Merseyside's Government from 1st April" have been produced; to whom they are to be distributed; and what is the total cost including the cost of preparation.

Mr. Tracey: My Department has produced and distributed to all households and business premises in Merseyside 600,000 copies of the leaflet "The New Structure of Government in Merseyside". The cost of printing was £7,270.

It is not possible to break down the costs of preparation and distribution as between the GLC and the metropolitan county areas. The total costs of preparation and distribution were £4,300 and £150,504 respectively.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many leaflets entitled the "New Structure of West Midlands' Government from 1st April" have been produced; to whom they are to be distributed; and what is the total cost including the cost of preparation.

Mr. Tracey: My Department has produced and distributed to all households and business premises in the West Midlands 1,000,000 copies of the leaflet "The New Structure of Government in the West Midlands". The cost of printing was £10,034.

It is not possible to break down the costs of preparation and distribution as between the GLC and the metropolitan county areas. The total costs of preparation and distribution were £4,300 and £150,504 respectively.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many leaflets entitled the "New Structure of Tyne and Wear's Government from 1st April" have been produced; to whom they are to be distributed; and what is the total cost including the cost of preparation.

Mr. Tracey: My Department has produced and distributed to all households and business premises in Tyne and Wear 500,000 copies of the leaflet "The New Structure of Government in Tyne and Wear". The cost of printing was £5,964.

It is not possible to break down the costs of preparation and distribution as between the GLC and the metropolitan county areas. The total costs of preparation and distribution were £4,300 and £150,504 respectively.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many leaflets entitled the "New Structure of Greater Manchester's Government from 1st April" have been produced; to whom they are to be distributed; and what is the total cost including the cost of preparation.

Mr. Tracey: My Department has produced and distributed to all households and business premises in Greater Manchester 1,000,000 copies of the leaflet "The New Structure of Government in Greater Manchester". The cost of printing was £9,744.

It is not possible to break down the costs of preparation and distribution as between the GLC and the metropolitan county areas. The total costs of preparation and distribution were £4,300 and £150,504 respectively.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many leaflets entitled the "New Structure of London's Government from 1st April" have been produced; to whom they are to be distributed; and what is the total cost including the cost of preparation.

Mr. Tracey: My Department has produced and distributed to all households and business premises in the

Greater London area 2,650,000 copies of the leaflet "The New Structure of London's Government". The cost of printing was £24,344.

It is not possible to break down the costs of preparation and distribution as between the GLC and the metropolitan county areas. The total costs of preparation and distribution were £4,300 and £150,504 respectively.

GLC (Consent Applications)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he expects to have completed his consideration of the application for consent to St. George's way site, Burgess park, for which the Greater London council applied on 15 July 1985;

(2) when he expects to have completed his consideration of the application for consent to changing rooms, Burgess park, for which the Greater London council applied on 15 July 1985;

(3) when he expects to have completed his consideration of the application for consent to the sports area car park, Burgess park, for which the Greater London council applied on 15 July 1985;

(4) when he expects to have completed his consideration of the application for consent to Trinity college, craft choice sites layout, Burgess park, for which the Greater London council applied on 15 July 1985;

(5) when he expects to have completed his consideration of the application for consent for the site 34 layout, Mile End, for which the Greater London council applied on 15 July 1985;

(6) when he expects to have completed his consideration of the application for consent to sites 9, 10 and 11 (part layout), Mile End park, for which the Greater London council applied on 15 July 1985;

(7) when he expects to have completed his consideration of the application for consent to the site 8 layout, Mile End park, for which the Greater London council applied on 15 July 1985;

(8) when he expects to have completed his consideration of the application for consent to site 26 layout, Mile End park, for which the Greater London council applied on 15 July 1985;

(9) when he expects to have completed his consideration of the application for consent to the new athletics track at Finsbury Park, for which the Greater London council applied on 15 July 1985;

(10) when he expects to have completed his consideration of the application for consent to the site 33 layout, Mile End park, for which the Greater London council applied on 15 July 1985.

Mr. Tracey: Further information on these applications was sought from the GLC on 11 November 1985. This is still awaited.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to have completed his consideration of application for the consent to renewal of boundary fencing, Finsbury Park for which the Greater London council applied on 29 January.

Mr. Tracey: Consent was given on 19 February 1986.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to have completed his consideration of the application for consent to a grant towards the operating costs of the 1985 Brent carnival for which the Greater London council applied on 26 June 1985.

Mr. Tracey: Consent was refused on 6 March 1986.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to have completed his consideration of application for consent to Pagoda landscaping, stage 2, Battersea park, for which the Greater London council applied on 15 July 1985.

Mr. Tracey: Further information was sought from the GLC on 18 December 1985. This has not yet been received.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to have completed his consideration of the application for consent to post and rail fencing at Burdett gardens, Mile End park, for which the Greater London council applied on 29 January.

Mr. Tracey: Consent was given on 27 February 1986.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to have completed his consideration of the application for landscape work at Gallions lake, South Edge, Thamesmead, for which the Greater London council applied on 13 February.

Mr. Tracey: Consent was given on 11 March 1986.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to have completed his consideration of the application for consent to temporary open space, Coin street, for which the Greater London council applied on 15 July 1985.

Mr. Tracey: Consent was given on 14 February 1986.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to have completed his consideration of the application for consent to phase 4 at Wormwood Scrubs, for which the Greater London council applied on 15 July 1985.

Mr. Tracey: Consent was refused on 24 February 1986.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 11 March, *Official Report*, column *433-34*, what was the date on which his Department requested further information from the Greater London council in respect of the following outstanding consents: 5 Westminster bridge road SE1, Anti-Racist Awareness, Battersea park, each of the four applications for Burgess park, Carrington House Support Team, Civil Defence Video Films, Dial-A-Ride, Finsbury park, Mile End, each of the four applications for Mile End park, Parliament hill, Spar housing association, Victoria park-Burdett gardens and Yarnton way, Thamesmead.

Mr. Tracey: The following is the information:

5 Westminister bridge road SE1—13 February 1986
Anti-Racist Awareness—8 July 1985
Battersea park—11 November 1985
Burgess park—11 November 1985
Burgess park—11 November 1985
Burgess park—11 November 1985
Burgess park—11 November 1985
Carrington House Support Team—6 March 1986
Civil Defence Video Films—13 November 1985
Dial-A-Ride—5 November 1985
Finsbury park—11 November 1985

Mile End—11 November 1985
Mile End park—11 November 1985
Mile End park—11 November 1985
Mile End park—11 November 1985
Mile End park—11 November 1985
Parliament hill—11 November 1985
Spar housing association—12 December 1985
Victoria park—Burdett gardens—3 February 1986
Yarnton way, Thamesmead—7 November 1985

Croxteth Hall and Park

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 7 March, *Official Report*, column *286*, to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) what allowances for Croxteth hall and park were made available in the 1986-87 rate support grant settlement; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: £0·6 million of expenditure on Croxteth hall, and £0·3 million on Croxteth park, was assumed to pass from Merseyside county council to Liverpool city council. Liverpool's grant-related expenditure for museums and galleries increased by £0·9 million and for recreation by £0·4 million.

Nature Conservancy Council (Geological Observation Unit)

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from geologists about the Nature Conservancy Council's geological conservation unit; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: A number of representations have been received. I am satisfied that the Nature Conservancy Council fully recognises the importance of geological conservation. It has significantly expanded its activities in this area with increases in both permanent and contract staff. Further increases in permanent staff are planned.

Voluntary Organisations (Grants)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, under the following heads, all those consulted during the process of considering applications submitted to his Department by local authorities for transitional grant for voluntary organisations formerly funded by the Greater London council under the following heads *(a)* organisations outside Government, including political parties and *)b)* private individuals, including local councillors.

Sir George Young: No formal consultations were held. The Secretary of State did, however, take such steps as he considered necessary to ensure that transitional grant funds would be applied effectively.

County Hall, London

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has received any approaches from the Metropolitan police for the use of the County hall, London SE1

Mr. Tracey: No.

Council House Sales

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sales of council houses to tenants were completed in Bolton during 1985.

Sir George Young: Bolton district council reported 334 sales to sitting tenants during 1985.

"Acid Rain"

Sir Hugh Rossi asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek from the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board a copy of the board's film "Acid Rain"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department has received a copy of this film. Its contents are entirely a matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Citadels

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which five of the second world war citadels mentioned in his answer on 25 February, *Official Report*, column *491*, now remains on the Government estate; and by which department or departments the citadels are now used.

Sir George Young: The five citadels are Broad Sanctuary; Admiralty, Curzon Street House and Montague House; and Horseferry road. They are currently allocated to the Treasury, Ministry of Defence and the Department of Transport respectively.

Docklands (House Sales)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give an annual breakdown, since 1981, of all houses sold in Docklands and the percentage costing under £40,000.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 November 1985, c. *63*]: The information is given in the following table:

Breakdown of house sales on LDDC owned land by fiscal year to 30 September 1985

Sites in	1981-82		1982-83		1983-84		1984-85		1 April 1985 to 30 September 1985	
	Total Number of Units Sold	Percentage sold under £40,000	Total Number of Units Sold	Percentage sold under £40,000	Total Number of Units Sold	Percentage sold under £40,000	Total Number of Units Sold	Percentage sold under £40,000	Total Number of Units Sold	Percentage sold under £40,000
London Borough of Newham	2	100	405	99	380	95	371	78	181	48
London Borough of Southwark	0	—	0	—	72	99	283	72	145	57
London Borough of Tower Hamlets	0	—	0	—	0	—	26	100	292	34
Grand Totals	2	100	405	99	452	95	680	76	618	43

Note: These figures do not include sales to housing associations or housing units reserved but not yet sold.

EMPLOYMENT

Ethnic Minorities (MSC Assistance)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on available Manpower Services Commission assistance to ethnic minorities.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Manpower Services Commission's policy is to make its services available equally to all, regardless of ethnic origin, sex or disability. Programmes are mounted specifically for ethnic minorities where they have special needs, such as language training, or where they are under-represented in particular skills or occupations. The Manpower Services Commission monitors the participation of ethnic minorities in most of its programmes and will shortly monitor their participation in the remaining programmes, in order to find out whether they are under-represented. I hope to consider soon with the MSC ways by which we might increase the effectiveness of our programmes in inner city areas and amongst ethnic minorities.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Merchant asked the Paymaster General how many persons aged *(a)* 16 years and *(b)* 17 years are at present engaged in YTS schemes in (i) Newcastle upon Tyne and (ii) England and Wales, in total and as a proportion of the age group.

Mr. Trippier: I regret that the information is not available in the precise form requested. However, at 28 February 1986, the latest date for which statistics are available, there were 2,031 young people of all ages in training on YTS in Newcastle upon Tyne.

In the training division Newcastle area as a whole there were 4,848 young people in training and 245,802 in England and Wales. These two figures represent 65 and 52 per cent. respectively of the young people eligible to join YTS.

Union Membership

Mr. Silvester asked the Paymaster General if he will introduce legislation to prevent employers refusing employment to candidates unless they agree to join a union, in cases where such union membership agreement has not been approved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am continually monitoring the effectiveness of the protection we have provided against abuses of the closed shop and keeping under review the need for further legislation.

The law already provides that no one can be dismissed without compensation for not belonging to a trade union in an unapproved closed shop. This protection is available to new recruits from their first day of employent.

Ethnic Minority Population (Entrepreneurial Skills)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General what steps he is taking to promote a growth in entrepreneurial skills amongst the ethnic minority population in the inner cities.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Winnick asked the Paymaster General how many of those in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the west midlands and *(c)* the Black Country area of the west midlands have been unemployed for 12 months and more; what the numbers were in May 1979; and what has been the percentage change in the three groups, retrospectively.

Mr. Lang: The following table gives the available information for the United Kingdom and the west midlands.

Unemployed-Over 12 months

	United Kingdom	West Midlands
Unemployed Registrants		
April 1979	366,711	34,154
October 1982	1,169,558	155,741
Percentage increase	+219	+356
Unemployed Claimants		
October 1982	989,306	129,706
April 1983	1,143,436	154,460
Percentage increase	+15·6	+19·1
April 1983	1,143,436	154,460
October 1983	1,142,874	152,423

Comparisons over this period are affected by the provisions in the 1983 Budget, which removed 160,000 people overall from the count, some 18,700 in the west midlands.

	United Kingdom	West Midlands
October 1983	1,142,874	152,423
January 1986	1,371,632	165,824
Percentage increase	+20	+8·8

On 9 January 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, in the Dudley and Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton travel-to-work areas, that closely correspond to the Black Country area, the number of claimants who had been unemployed for over 12 months was 50,082.

Comparisons of unemployment over the period specified are difficult to make because of the change in the basis of the count in October 1982, the 1983 Budget provisions, which mean that some men, mainly aged 60 or over, no longer need to sign on at unemployment benefit offices to receive benefit, and, for local areas, the change to a ward-based system for allocating claimants to localities. However, in April 1979 (not available for May 1979) the number of registrants at jobcentres within the old Dudley and Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton travel-to-work areas as defined in 1978, who had been unemployed for over 12 months was 8,164.

Mr. Winnick asked the Paymaster General how many persons under 21 years in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the west midlands and *(c)* the Black Country area of the west midlands have been unemployed for 12 months and more; what the numbers were in May 1979; and what has been the percentage change in the three groups, respectively.

Mr. Lang: The following table gives the available information for the United Kingdom and the west midlands.

Under 20 years of age and unemployed for over 12 months

	United Kingdom	West Midlands
Unemployed registrants		
April 1979	19,799	1,837
October 1982	101,414	12,805
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*
Percentage increase	+412	+59
Unemployed claimants		
October 1982	88,595	11,387
January 1986	104,600	12,499
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*
Percentage increase	+18·1	+9·8

On 9 January 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age and duration is available, in the Dudley and Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton travel-to-work areas that closely correspond to the Black Country area, the number of unemployed claimants aged under 20 years (not available for under 21 years) who had been unemployed for over 12 months was 3,778.

Comparisons of unemployment over the period specified are difficult to make because of the change in the basis of the count in October 1982 and, for local areas, the change to a ward-based system for allocating claimants to localities. However, in April 1979 (not available for May 1979) the number of unemployed registrants at jobcentres within the old Dudley and Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton travel-to-work areas, as defined in 1978, aged under 20 years and who had been unemployed for over 12 months was 434.

Mr. Winnick asked the Paymaster General if he will give the total number of full-time employees made redundant in *(a)* the west midlands and *(b)* the Black Country area of the west midlands since May 1979; what were the figures for the seven years prior to May 1979; and what is the change in percentage terms in the two areas, respectively.

Mr. Lang: The latest available figures for all confirmed redundancies are set out in the table. To extract the information on redundancies of full-time employees would involve disproportinate cost. Data on confirmed redundancies are not available for years before 1977.

Redundancies confirmed as due to occur 1977 to 1985*
Black Country

Period	Jobcentre areas	West Midlands
May 1979 to December 1985†	82,410	277,788
January 1977 to April 1979	6,908	20,200

* Confirmed by the Manpower Services Commission as due to occur and based on notifications of impending redundancies involving ten or more workers.

† Includes provisional figures for December 1985.

Civil Defence

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Paymaster General what joint plans have been agreed by the Government for the services of British civilian workers in any capacity to be made available in the United Kingdom to support foreign military forces involved in the reinforcement of Europe if this became necessary during grave national tension.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: An arrangement between the United States and the United Kingdom permits the United States to establish, operate and maintain lines of communication and ancillary facilities in the United Kingdom for use under emergency conditions as part of its NATO obligations, with the proviso that the United Kingdom Government always have priority in the use of national resources. As part of the arrangement, the United Kingdom has agreed to take steps to try to ensure that its requirements for civilian manpower support are met. Detailed planning in support of the arrangment is classified.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Mr. William Shelton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the percentage of the total adult population in the United Kingdom who pay income tax.

Mr. Moore: In 1985-86 it is estimate that about 65 per cent. of the total of single people and married couples pay income tax. The figures exclude young people aged under 16 and those over 16 still at school.

Sir Peter Horden asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what a single person earning £140 a week would pay now, in income tax and national insurance contributions, at the current rates, allowances and rate bands; and what such a person would pay at 1978-79 rates, allowances and rate bands.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 March 1986, c. 582]: The information for each year is as follows:

(£ per week)

	1978-79	*1985-86*
Earnings	140·00	140·00
Income Tax	38·80	29·28
NIC	7·80	12·60
Income Tax + NIC	46·60	41·88

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what a single person earning £8,500 a year would have to pay in income tax *(a)* at rates, allowances and rate bands and *(b)* at rates, allowances and rate bands obtaining in June 1979.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 March 1986, c. *582*]: The information for each year is as follows:

(£ per annum)

	**1979-80*	*1985-86*
Earnings	8,500	8,500
Income Tax	2,163	1,888·50

* At income tax rates and allowances for 1979-80 in the Finance (No. 2) Act 1979.

Cigarettes (Taxation)

Mr. Dubs asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the extra revenue in a full year of increasing the tax on cigarettes by 10p, 15p and 25p, respectively, per packet of 20 cigarettes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The estimated net additional revenue, at 1986-87 prices, would be:

Increase in price of 20 cigarettes (pence)	*Full year revenue yield (£ million)*
10	310
15	460
25	750

The larger the price increase, the greater the degree of uncertainty to which these estimates are subject.

Taxation (Commercial Woodlands)

Mr. John asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what additional tax revenue would be yielded by abolition of the schedule B option for owners of commercial woodlands.

Mr. Moore: The revenue cost of the election available to an occupier of commercial woodlands to be assessed under schedule D instead of schedule B is tentatively estimated at £10 million for 1985-86.

Mr. John asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) for each of the last 10 years, what was the number of instances in which commercial woodland changed from taxation under schedule B to taxation under schedule D; what was the total area of land involved: and if he will give equivalent figures for changes from schedule D to schedule B;

(2) how many owners of commercial woodland have opted for taxation under schedule B and schedule D, respectively; and what area of commercial woodland is taxed under each schedule.

Mr. Moore: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. John asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what basis commercial woodland is valued for purposes of schedule B taxation; and what is the average valuation per acre.

Mr. Moore: The assessable value of woodlands for the purpose of schedule B is one-third of the annual value of the land in its natural and unimproved state.

The average value per acre used for schedule B purposes is 45p.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Wainwright asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what guidance he gives to retailers about including in value added tax returns the proceeds of sales of gas board and electricity board stamps; and whether he intends any change in this respect.

Mr. Brooke: Customs and Excise notice 727 (VAT: Retail Schemes), which is published pursuant to the Value Added Tax (Supplies by Retailers) Regulations 1972 (as amended), explains the conditions of the schemes which may be used by retailers as simplified methods of working out their VAT.

Customs and Excise issued amendment No. 1 to the notice in February 1986, which requires any retailers who sell gas, electricity, television licence or similar savings stamps to deal with the stamps outside their retail scheme calculations. It follows the decision of the Manchester VAT tribunal in the case of T.G., M. & I.J. Parr (MAN/85/241) which held that retailers could include gas and electricity savings stamps in their scheme calculations since notice No. 727 did not specifically require them not to do so.

I am placing a copy of notice No. 727 and of amendment No. 1 in the Library.

EC (Budget)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why the budget for 1986 which was approved by the Council of Ministers was prepared using an assumption of an exchange rate of one dollar=1·20 European currency units; who was responsible for making the assumption; if the assumption was discussed at the meeting of the Council; and what view Her Majesty's Government took of this assumption.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Gaston Schloh (European Court Judgment)

Mr. Jackson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the United Kingdom is implementing the Court of Justice judgment in the Gaston Schloh case (85/82).

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 March 1986, c. *284*]: Yes. The European Court of Justice judgment of 5 May 1982 in the case of Gaston Schloh (15/81) was implemented in the United Kingdom in October 1982.

Tax Thresholds

Mr. Frank Field asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will express for each year since 1955-56 the tax threshold as a percentage of average earnings for a single person, married couple, married couple with two children and married couple with four children.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 March 1986, c. *390*]: I refer the hon. Member to appendix C of "Inland Revenue Statistics 1985", a copy of which is in the Library.

Lump Sum Payments

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many appeals against decisions of inspectors of taxes to seek to assess lump sum payments made in consideration of taking up employment have been heard before *(a)* the general commissioners and *(b)* the special commissioners in the last 12 months; and in how many cases the commissioners have held the payments not to be assessable.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 March 1986, c. *458*]: There is no centrally held record of either the numbers or outcome of the appeals heard in the last 12 months by the Appeal Commissioners against the assessment to tax of such payments. This could be ascertained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to amend the law relating to the assessment to income tax on lump sum payments made in consideration of taking up employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 March 1986 c. *458*]: I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend's Budget statement.

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what clearances have been given by the Inland Revenue for schemes providing for payment of a lump sum contingent on a partner remaining within a particular partnership for a specified period that they will not seek to tax them as income; and if he will make a statment.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 March 1986, c. *458*]: I shall write to the hon. Member if he will let me know the details of any particular case he has in mind.

THE ARTS

South Bank Centre

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts (1) if he will publish a list of existing staff by grade and members who have been offered employment in the South Bank concert halls following abolition of the Greater London council;

(2) how many staff to date in the South Bank concert halls have failed to secure employment in the halls following abolition of the Greater London council;

(3) if he will provide a breakdown by numbers and categories of the full-time staff to be employed by the South Bank board in the South Bank concert halls following abolition of the Greater London council;

(4) how many of the existing staff of the South Bank concert halls have been offered jobs by successful tenderers for contracted-out services.

Mr. Luce: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the future of the South Bank craft centre.

Mr. Luce: It is intended that the present operation will continue for the foreseeable future, essentially unchanged.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts what progress has been made by the South Bank board with interested parties connected with the continuance of Thamesday, South Bank Weekend and the Children's Festival; who has been consulted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: A meeting has been arranged for 24 March, to be hosted by the South Bank board, and including representatives of:

The London Council of Sport and Recreation
The Corporation of London
Westminster City Council
The London Visitor and Conventions Bureau
Thames Water Authority
The Greater London Council

I am confident that events of this kind will have a fixed place in the future pattern of activities on the South Bank.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts how many of the existing staff currently employed in the South Bank concert halls and offered employment by the South Bank board do not qualify for financial detriment.

Mr. Luce: Detriment is a matter to be determined by the London Residuary Body.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts if he will provide a breakdown of the expenses incurred by the executive chairman and members of the South Bank group and, since its formal constitution on 1 September 1985, the South Bank board to date.

Mr. Luce: The expenses are broken down as follows:

	£
Travel	4,639
Subsistence	1,244
Other expenses	1,816
	7,699

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts what is the amount budgeted by the South Bank board for expenses for 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: No specific item in the budget is attributable to "expenses".

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts, pursuant to his reply of 11 February, *Official Report*, column *429*, what information was gathered by Mr. Pulford and Mr. Grierson from their fact-finding visits to the United States of America, Canada and Australia.

Mr. Luce: A great deal of useful information was obtained about the organisation and operation of multi-purpose arts centres.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts how the South Bank board intends to give more emphasis to literature in the South Bank centre; and what alternative locations for bookspace are being considered.

Mr. Luce: The South Bank board is considering the relocation on the South Bank of the Arts Council's poetry library, the greater use of the Purcell room for events with a literary content, and an extension of bookselling facilities. The board will be considering which will be the most appropriate spaces for literary purposes, once it has full access to the South Bank concert halls after 1 April.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts pursuant to his reply of 11 February, *Official Report*,

column *429*, if he will provide a breakdown of the £8,024 paid by the Arts Council for the fact-finding visits to the United States of America, Canada and Australia by Mr. Pulford and Mr. Grierson.

Mr. Luce: The expenses amounted to £8,042, divided as to:

	£
Travel	5,832
Subsistence	2,210

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts pursuant to his reply of 11 February, if he will provide details of the contract of employment between the general director (administration) and the South Bank board.

Mr. Luce: The contract has not yet been issued.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts pursuant to his answer on 11 February, *Official Report*, column *429*, which arts organisations were visited in the United States of America, Canada and Australia by Mr. Pulford and Mr. Grierson.

Mr. Richard Luce: The information is as follows:

In the United States:
- The Lincoln Centre, New York
- Carnegie Hall, New York
- The Brooklyn Academy of Music
- The Kennedy Centre, Washington
- The Music Centre, Los Angeles
- The National Endowment for the Arts, Washington
- New York City Hall

In Canada
- Harbourfront Centre, Toronto
- O'Keefe Centre, Toronto
- Roy Thomson Hall, Toronto
- St. Lawrence Centre, Toronto
- Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture

In Australia
- Sydney Opera House
- Brisbane Arts Centre
- Victoria Arts Centre, Melbourne
- The Australia Council
- Offices of the Ministers for the Arts, New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts when the Arts Council will announce the level of funding of the South Bank board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: An announcement should be made later this month.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts, pursuant to his reply of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *379*, what progress has been made by the South Bank board in contracting out cleaning services, security and some maintenance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Tenders have been accepted in all cases.

Topolski (Memoir of the Century)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts what conditions have been agreed between the South Bank board and the London Residuary Body about the future of Felix Topolski's Memoir of the Century.

Mr. Luce: It is intended that the Memoir of the Century should continue to be housed and serviced on the present basis.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 18 March 1986

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

"Rights of Access to Neighbouring Land"

Mr. Colvin asked the Attorney-General when he proposes to bring forward legislation along the lines of the proposals in the Law Commission's report, Cmnd. 9692, "Rights of Access to Neighbouring Land"; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: This report was published only in December 1985. Since it raises questions of general public interest, the Government intend to allow a reasonable time for public comment before deciding whether to give effect to the Law Commission's recommendations.

ENVIRONMENT

Rates

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish, for every rating authority in England, a table consistent with figure J3 on page 121 of Cmnd. 9714, showing also the total gross domestic rates paid in each authority in the base year used for the construction of figure J3.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Figure J3 illustrates the pattern of changes in income for local authorities which could result from the implementation of the grant and non-domestic rate changes proposed in the Green Paper. Like all the illustrations in the Green Paper it is based on 1984-85 expenditure, GRE and grant figures and on notional rate poundages as calculated for block grant purposes, disregarding grant holdback. At the level of aggregation provided in the Green Paper, calculations based on the assumption that the relative magnitudes of these figures will remain unchanged give a reasonable guide to the likely impact of the proposals. At the level of individual authorities, however, it is unlikely that these assumptions would still be valid by the time any changes were implemented. So the figures for individual authorities could not be regarded as a reliable guide to the impact of the proposals at that level.

Mr. Orme asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities in England and Wales set rate increases of over 20 per cent. for 1985-86 compared with 1984-85.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is as follows:

Authorities with a Rate or Precept increase of over 20% from 1984-85 to 1985-86

Amber Valley
Ashfield
Babergh
Bassetlaw
Berwick-upon-Tweed
Birmingham
Blackburn
Blyth Valley
Bolsover
Brentwood
Broadland
Cannock Chase
Carmarthen
Castle Morpeth
Ceredigion
Chelmsford
Chiltern
Daventry
Dudley
Durham
Eastleigh
Forest Heath
Gloucester
Hackney
Harborough
Kerrier
Kingston-upon-Hull
Kirklees
Malvern Hills
Mid Sussex
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Newcastle under Lyme
North Devon
North Dorset
North Hertfordshire
North Warwickshire
Rhondda
Salford
Scunthorpe
Sedgefield
Sedgemoor
Selby
Slough
South Hams
South Staffordshire
Staffs. Moorlands
Stockton on Tees
Stroud
Suffolk Coastal
Swale
Taff-Ely
Torbay
Torridge
Wealden
Wear Valley
West Devon
West Wiltshire
Wychavon

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on meetings he has had with representatives of the ENSEC method of nuclear waste disposal;

(2) when he last had discussions relating to the ENSEC method of nuclear waste disposal; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what discussions he has had with the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive regarding the ENSEC method of nuclear waste disposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend has not had any meetings with representatives of ENSEC Ltd. although I did so on 2 November 1983. With regard to discussions with NIREX, I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 11 March 1986 at columns *431-2*. In the course of these discussions the ENSEC proposal has been raised.

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the alternative methods of nuclear waste disposal, apart from land dumping, which have been presented to his Department for consideration;

(2) what is his Department's assessment of the safety implications of using the ENSEC method of nuclear waste disposal;

(3) what is his Department's assessment of the environmental implications of using the ENSEC method of nuclear waste disposal;

(4) what assessment his Department has made of the potential uses of the ENSEC method of nuclear waste disposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The study of best practicable environmental options (BPEOs) for the management of low and intermediate level wastes, recently completed under my Department's direction, examined all the main alternative management methods. The options considered were—sea disposal; near-surface land burial in simple trenches; near-surface land burial in concrete-lined trenches preceded by 10 years' storage for current stocks of wastes; land burial in deep cavities, preceded by, respectively, 15, 45 and 200 years' storage for current stocks; burial in off-shore boreholes preceded by 15 years' storage for current stocks; and long-term surface storage.

Copies of the report are in the Library.

The study's assessment of off-shore disposal was based on an outline proposal by ENSEC. The study found that the option would be unnecessarily complex and expensive for low-level and shorter-lived intermediate level wastes. For longer-lived intermediate level radioactive wastes, the option would be comparable in terms of cost and radiological impact with land burial in deep cavities. Site-specific studies and engineering designs would be necessary to determine which option was the BPEO. The concept of disposing of wastes in offshore boreholes is not so well-developed as that of deep land disposal. Wastes buried offshore would not be so easily retrievable.

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will instruct the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive to prepare a public consultation document on any alternative method of nuclear waste disposal which it has considered.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. The Government have the responsibility for determining the overall strategy for the management of radioactive waste, including optimum disposal routes. It is, therefore, for the Government to consult on the options as they arise; and this they have done, in the production of the report on the study of the best practicable environmental options for the management of low and intermediate level radioactive waste made public on 13 March.

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if, when he meets the chairman of the CEGB on 26 March, he will raise with him the ENSEC method of nuclear waste disposal; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will instruct the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive to investigate the ENSEC method of nuclear waste disposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on 30 October 1985 at column *531*. Until the results of the feasibility studies commissioned by NIREX are known it would be premature to consider other possible studies or to include them in discussions with the chairman of the CEGB on 26 March.

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what environmental groups he has consulted in formulating his policy regarding nuclear dumping.

Mr. Waldegrave: Most recently, my Department consulted seven national environmental and amenity groups during the preparation of the assessment of best practicable environmental options for the management of low and intermediate level solid radioactive wastes. The groups concerned were the Council for Environmental Conservation, the Council for the Protection of Rural England, Friends of the Earth, the Green Alliance, Greenpeace, the National Federation of Women's Institutes and the Town and Country Planning Association.

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he will not publish the names of all sites considered by the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive since 1 January 1985 as possibilities for the dumping of nuclear waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not know the sites considered by NIREX.

Hazardous Wastes

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make available details of finances provided by his Department for research and development into methods of the disposal by land-filling of hazardous wastes, in each year since 1980; and if he will list the recipients of such moneys.

Mr. Waldegrave: The funding of research by my Department on the disposal of household and industrial wastes by land-filling since 1980 is as follows:—

	£'000
1980-81	398
1981-82	521
1982-83	746
1983-84	670
1984-85	592
1985-86	628

Work on hazardous waste is included in these totals. The nature of most of the research contracts does not allow separate identification of work on hazardous wastes.

The recipients of the funding were:—

British Geological Survey
Water Research Centre
AERE—Harwell
Aspinwall and Company
Biotechnics Limited
M. J. Carter Associates
P. P. C. Consultant Services Limited
Amey Roadstone Corporation
Essex County Council
Leicester County Council
Suffolk County Council
Wrexham Maelor Borough Council
British Steel Corporation
National Physical Laboratory
Essex University

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make available details of finance provided by his Department for research and development into methods recognised as possible alternatives to land-fill hazardous waste disposal in each year since 1980; and if he will list the recipients of such money, method by method.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department has provided the following funds since 1980 for research and development into possible alternatives to land-filling of hazardous wastes.

Year	*£'000*
1980-81	27
1981-82	183
1982-83	225
1983-84	213
1984-85	186
1985-86	190

The recipients of the funding were:

Centre for Applied Microbiology Research—Porton
Waste Research Unit—Harwell
Imperial College
Dames & Moore Ltd.

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the total moneys spent by *(a)* central

Government and *(b)* waste disposal authorities in England and Wales on the post-operative care and rehabilitation of hazardous waste land-fill sites.

Mr. Waldegrave: I regret that this information is not readily available. My Department does not keep a record of the amounts of money spent by waste disposal authorities on the post-operative care and rehabilitation of hazardous waste land-fill sites. Central Government expenditure in England for this purpose comes under my Department's allocation to derelict land reclamation, currently at £82 million; only a very small proportion of this total is likely to be allocated specifically to hazardous waste land-fill sites.

Non-human Primates

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total number of each species of non-human primate which have been imported into Britain in each year since 1979.

Mrs. Rumbold: Details of recorded imports of non-human primate species in 1979-83 are given in the annual reports on the implementation in the United Kingdom of the convention of international trade in endangered species (CITES) published by this Department.

Since January 1984, CITES has been implemented under EC regulation 3626/82; trade statistics for 1984 and 1985 will be published by the European Commission in due course. I shall write to the hon. Member with details of the United Kingdom figures.

Noise Levels (Sleep)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if Her Majesty's Government are planning any research projects on the adverse effects arising from noise interrupting sleep.

Mrs. Rumbold: A number of institutions, including the Medical Research Council collaborated in an EC study of the effects of noise on sleep as part of the third EC environment research programme. I also understand that the Transport and Road Research Laboratory is planning studies of nuisance from traffic noise including annoyance from sleep disturbance, though not the medical or other effects.

Sulphur Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the scale of the sulphur dioxide emissions in each of the European Economic Community countries for *(a)* 1974 and *(b)* the most recently available date.

Mrs. Rumbold: The United Kingdom is one of the few countries which publish information annually about national emissions. Full comparative data on EC countries' sulpher dioxide emissions are available only for those years which were the subject of data-gathering exercises carried out by international organisations. The nearest year to 1974 for which full figures are available is 1972 and the latest is 1982. The figures are as follows:

	1972	*1982*
	million tonnes SO_2	
Belgium	1·14	0·81
Denmark	0·48	0·40
France	3·53	2·54
Germany	3·91	3·00
Greece	0·20	0·34
Ireland	0·19	0·16
Italy	3·17	3·07
Luxembourg	0·05	0·02
Netherlands	0·59	0·40
Portugal	*0·18	†0·36
Spain	1·14	n.a.
United Kingdom	5·64	4·01

* 1973.
† 1983.
n.a.=not available.

Tipping

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each county in England the number of land-fill sites currently in use for controlled tipping.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department does not collect this information.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* for the latest year for which information is available for each right hon. and hon. Member, the arithmetic mean in days that his Department took to reply to letters.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Information in the form requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, samples taken from the records of correspondence dealt with during the period October 1985 to December 1985 indicate that the average time taken to reply to hon. Members' correspondence is approximately 3½weeks.

Voluntary Organisations

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received concerning the future of voluntary organisations following the abolition of the Greater Manchester council; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The general secretary of the Greater Manchester Council for Voluntary Service has written an open letter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about funding of voluntary bodies after abolition. My Noble Friend the Minister of State will reply shortly, and I will place a copy of the correspondence in the Library.

Webbers Yard, Dartington

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, in the light of the answer on 3 December 1985, *Official Report*, column *171-2*, to the hon. Member for South Hams in regard to Webbers Yard, Dartington, application for a grant from the European regional development fund for a new road, what steps he has taken and what steps he proposes to take to ensure a final decision is made by the European Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: The Department of Trade and Industry, which leads on European regional development fund matters, is seeking a final decision from the European Commission on applications submitted for grant aid from areas which lost their assisted area status in November 1984. The Commission's decision will be notified to the authorities concerned as soon as possible.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Orme asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities have taken legal action in respect of the 1985-86 rate support grant allocations.

Mrs. Rumbold: The following local authorities have taken legal action in respect of expenditure guidance or disregards or both: Lambeth, Hammersmith and Fulham, Newcastle, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Bradford.

The following local authorities have taken legal action in respect of rate limitation: the GLC, the ILEA, Greenwich and Leicester.

Local Government Act 1985

Mr. Moynihan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he has made to provide information about the implementation of the Local Government Act 1985.

Mr. Tracey: A circular has today been issued to all borough and district councils in Greater London and the metropolitan counties and to other successor authorities. It provides a guide to the Act and describes the steps taken towards its implementation, including in particular matters which were not settled by the Act itself, and details of joint arrangements now being made by successor authorities of which the Department has been informed. I have arranged for copies of the circular to be placed in the Library. My Department has also recently issued an explanatory memorandum on the compensation and early release arrangements for staff affected by the Act. Copies of this have also been placed in the Library.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Racial Discrimination (Contract Compliance)

76. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will now introduce contract compliance as a means of tackling racial discrimination.

Mr. Brooke: The main objective of Government purchasing is to obtain value for money. Within Government contracts there is a standard condition that contractors shall not unlawfully discriminate within the meaning and scope of the provisions of the race relations legislation. When it comes to the attention of a Department that a contractor is discriminating unlawfully, the contractor will be asked to take any necessary preventive action.

Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970

Mr. Coombs asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether any decision has been made on the future of section 482 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970.

Mr. Moore: We have reviewed section 482 and its operation in the light of representations from business. We have concluded that it would be inappropriate to make any substantial changes to the legislation itself at the present time. I have, however, instructed the Inland Revenue to institute a reviwe of the general consents.

Section 482 contains a criminal penalty. The Government will consider the future of this penalty against the background of their deliberations and consultations on the recommendations of the Keith committee on enforcement powers of the Revenue departments.

EC (Government Loans)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer under which provisions of the European Community treaties Her Majesty's Government have made loans to the Community.

Mr. Brooke: Her Majesty's Government have not made any loans to the European Community under the provisions of a European Community treaty. A reimbursable advance of own resources was made in 1985 under the provisions of the 1984 intergovernmental agreement.

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what grounds Her Majesty's Government regard reimbursable advances to the European Economic Community by member states as revenue items.

Mr. Brooke: Article 4 of the 1970 own resources decision provides that the Community budget shall be financed "from 'own resources' irrespective of 'other revenue'". The Government, in common with the Governments of the other member states, regard the reimbursable advances paid to the Community under the 1984 IGA as 'other revenue'.

Lawyer-Client (Privilege)

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to hold discussions with representatives of the legal profession concerning the Keith committee recommendations on privilege between lawyer and client before any decisions thereon are reached by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Ian Stewart: As I said in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) on 11 December, at column *654*, the Inland Revenue has been authorised to continue its consultations with interested parties about the Keith committee recommendations. It is envisaged that these consultations will include the recommendations on privilege between lawyer and client.

Income Tax

Mr. Straw asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing *(a)* the proportion in percentage terms, *(b)* the amount in current prices and *(c)* the amount in constant 1985-86 prices of personal income taken by taxation and rates for the year 1986-87, taking account of any changes announced in his Budget statement and any previously announced changes, and for each of the years 1978-79, 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86 for each level of average earnings, each category of taxpayer,

and each category of taxation and rates, in the manner of the answers of 3 April 1985, *Official Report*, column *676*, and of 2 July 1985, *Official Report*, column *112*.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* for the latest year for which information is available for each right hon. and hon. Member, the arithmetic mean in days his Department took to reply to letters.

Mr. Brooke: The information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, in the last quarter of 1985 the arithmetic mean for replies by Treasury Ministers to letters from right hon. and hon. Members was 16 working days.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Wareing asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his plans for implementing the recommendation of the joint review group on employment opportunities for women in the Civil Service relating to the provision of a job-sharing arrangement within Her Majesty's Customs and Excise; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The report of the joint review group on employment opportunities for women in the Civil Service was published in December 1982. Early in 1983 Customs and Excise issued a circular to all staff drawing attention to the report. Pending central discussions on the report between the Management and Personnel Office and the Council of Civil Service Unions, the Department has dealt on an ad hoc basis with requests for part-time working and job-sharing. At 1 March 1986, the Department had a total of 451 part-time employees. At clerical assistant, clerical officer and executive officer levels there are 77 staff who, at their own request, have changed from full-time to part-time working. Of these, 32 are in job-sharing partnerships (20 at executive officer level). In addition, there are three higher executive officers and one principal working part-time at their own request.

Agreed central guidance has now been issued to Departments and Customs and Excise has been examining its application to the Department, where 80 per cent. of the staff are employed locally on mainly operational duties. Draft proposals were sent to the Department trade union side on 17 March, and it is hoped that a detailed circular can be issued to all staff shortly.

Civil List

Mr. Wood asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the total amount payable under the Civil List Acts to the Royal Family in the calendar years 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Lawson: The information on amounts payable to the royal family in the present and previous calendar year is as follows:

	1985 £	*1986* £
The Queen's Civil List	3,976,200	4,136,800
HM Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother	345,300	359,100
HRH The Duke of Edinburgh	192,600	200,300
HRH The Princess Anne, Mrs. Mark Phillips	120,000	124,800
HRH The Prince Andrew	20,000	20,000
HRH The Prince Edward	20,000	20,000
HRH The Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowdon	116,800	121,500
HRH Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester	47,300	49,200
HRH The Duke of Gloucester	94,000	97,800
HRH The Duke of Kent	127,000	132,000
HRH Princess Alexsandra Mrs. Angus Ogilvy	120,900	125,800
Total	5,180,100	5,387,300
Refunded by Her Majesty The Queen	341,900	355,600
	4,838,200	5,031,700

The increase in total is 4 per cent. These figures combine the sum payable directly from the Consolidated Fund with supplementation provided by the royal trustees via the Treasury Vote "Economic and financial Administration (HM Treasury) (Class XIX, Vote 12)"

Notes on payments to the royal family

1. Cash limit and running costs criteria have been applied to the figures for 1986.

2. Sums of £20,000 a year are payable from the Consolidated Fund in respect of their royal highnesses the Prince Andrew and the Prince Edward from the dates when they attained the age of 18 (19 February 1978 and 10 March 1982 respectively). An order was made by Her Majesty under section 4 of the Civil List Act 1952 limiting the annual amount to be paid to the Prince Edward from 1 January 1986 to £14,000.

3. Her Majesty paid £341,900 into the Consolidated Fund in respect of payments made in 1985 to members of the royal family whose expenses are met under section 3 of the Civil List Act 1972: a similar payment of £355,600 will be made for 1986.

Cash Limits

Mr. Coombs asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide details of the cash limits set for 1986-87.

Mr. MacGregor: The cash limits on expenditure to be voted in Estimates are listed in the appendix of the summary and guide to 1986-87 Supply Estimates (Cmnd. 9742), rounded to the nearest £1 million, and are shown precisely in the relevant booklets of Supply Estimates. The cash limits on local authority capital spending and other expenditure which is not voted are given in the table.

Cash Limits on expenditure not voted in Estimates 1986-87

Cash block and Department	*Description of expenditure*	*Cash limit £ million*
BOE1		
Bank of England	Bank of England administration costs in respect of note issue, debt management and exchange equalisation account	82·7

Cash block and Department	Description of expenditure	Cash limit £ million
DOE/HC1 Department of the Environment	Capital expenditure in England on housing financed through the Housing Corporation	585·0
DOE/LA1 Department of the Environment	Capital expenditure in England by local authorities on roads and transport, housing, schools, further education and teacher training, personal social services and other environmental services	2,361·2
DOE/NT1 Department of the Environment	Capital expenditure in England by new towns on housing, roads, commercial and industrial investment and certain water services	*−82·1
DOE/UA1 Department of the Environment	External financing requirements of Urban Development Corporations, capital expenditure on the urban programme and derelict land reclamation	349·5
HO/LA1 Home Office	Local authority public expenditure for capital projects on magistrates courts, probation and police service	127·0
HO/MP1 Home Office	Home Office expenditure by the Metropolitan Police on manpower, pay, pensions, premises, transport and other running costs	851·8
NID1 Northern Ireland Departments	Services broadly analogous to GB services covered by cash limits but including family practitioner services	2,288·5
SO/LA1 Scottish Office	Capital expenditure in Scotland by local authorities on roads and transport, water and sewerage, general services, urban programme, police and social work, schools, further education and teacher training	419·3
SO/LA2 Scottish Office	Capital expenditure in Scotland on housing by local authorities, new towns, the Scottish Special Housing Association and on schemes financed by the Housing Corporation, and industrial and commercial investment by new towns	487·3
WO/LA1 Welsh Office	Capital expenditure in Wales by local authorities, new towns and the Housing Corporation on roads and transport, housing, schools, further education and teacher training, personal social services, and other environmental services and by the Land Authority for Wales	314·8
	TOTAL	7,785·0

* The cash limit is net of receipts, which are expected to exceed capital expenditure in 1986-87.

Personal Income Levels

77. **Mr. Leighton** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how changes in personal income levels are affecting levels of employment.

Mr. MacGregor: Other things being equal, lower rises in average real pay would mean more jobs in the long term.

EC Budget

Mr. Bellingham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has received notice of the outcome of the United Kingdom's application to the European Court of Justice for interim measures regarding the 1986 Communities budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson: The president of the European Court of Justice has granted our applicaion for interim measures in terms of the following orders:

"1. The Commission shall implement, until 10 July 1986 or until the date on which the Court delivers its judgment in case 34/86, *Council* v *European Parliament*, whichever date shall be the earlier, the budget for the financial year 1986, as regards both payment appropriations and credit appropriations, on the basis of the draft budget established by the Council at its second reading on 27 November 1985, subject to those amendments decided by the Parliament on 12 December 1985, which do not have the effect of increasing non-compulsory expenditure, that is to say the amendments by way of transfer from budget line B 660 to the new lines B6615, 6616 and 6617 and to line 6632 and from budget line B 944 to line A 1 100.

2. In the first call which it makes, following this order, on the United Kingdom for funds relating to the 1986 budget, the Commission shall reduce the amount claimed, on the basis of the budget established by the Council at its second reading, by the amount of any overpayments made by the United Kingdom prior to this order on the basis of the budget declared by the President of the European Parliament on 18 December 1985.

3. Should the Court not deliver its judgment in the aforesaid case 34/86 on or before 10 July 1986, the United Kingdom shall reappear before the Court without delay in order to ascertain whether the Court will maintain the order which it has addressed to the Commission."

The Government welcome the court's judgment, which vindicates their decision to bring an action before the court for interim measures pending judgment on the substantive action against the European Parliament.

The Government will continue to work with their partners to ensure the successful outcome of the main case.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Civil Defence

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to increase the level of local authority grant-aid for civil defence in the light of the implementation of the 1983 Civil Defence Regulations and the control of Industrial Major Accidents Hazards Regulations 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Proposals for the level of civil defence grant will be included in the 1986-87 Supplementary Estimates which are being presented to Parliament today. Local authorities' costs in implementing

the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1985 are not eligible for civil defence grant-aid, but are recoverable from the site controller.

Tamils

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Tamils at present in the United Kingdom are still awaiting process of their applications for asylum; how many have been granted permission to stay to date; how many have been returned; and how many applications have been received from Tamils following the imposition of a visa requirement on 30 May 1985.

Mr. Waddington: Precise figures are not available, but it is estimated that applications for asylum from about 1,250 Sri Lankan citizens, most if not all of whom are likely to be Tamils, are outstanding. In 1985 two Sri Lankan Tamils were granted asylum and about 900 were given leave to enter or remain on an exceptional basis. Only one Tamil whose application was refused has been removed to Sri Lanka, although at least 40 have returned voluntarily; others have been returned to third countries. Since 30 May 1985 about 270 Sri Lankan citizens in this country have applied for asylum.

Uncorroborated Evidence

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been *(a)* charged and *(b)* convicted in English courts on the basis of uncorroborated evidence since 1979.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not available but I understand that it is the policy of the Director of Public Prosecutions to advise against such prosecutions.

Homicide

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* a breakdown by sex of the table 4.4 offences currently recorded as homicide by relationship of victim to principal suspect (1974-84) in Home Office "Criminal Statistics of England and Wales 1984" (Cmnd. 9621).

Mr. Mellor: The available information is given in the table.

To provide this breakdown for earlier years would involve disproportionate cost.

Offences currently recorded as homicide by relationship of victim to principal suspect and sex of victim*
England and Wales

Relationship	*Sex of victim*	*Number of offences*		
		1982	*1983*	*1984*
Victim acquainted with suspect				
Son or daughter	Male	27	34	33
	Female	34	23	34
Parent	Male	12	12	11
	Female	10	10	15
Spouse, cohabitant or former spouse or cohabitant	Male	13	16	14
	Female	102	87	97
Other family	Male	13	12	10
	Female	6	10	3
Lover or former lover†	Male	11	11	13
	Female	18	9	6
Friend or acquaintance	Male	106	78	131
	Female	43	42	46
Other associate	Male	13	12	12
	Female	4	2	8
Victim not acquainted with suspect				
Police officer of prison officer on duty‡‖¶	Male	5	2	2
	Female	1	1	1
Stranger (acts of terrorism)‡¶	Male	11	2	3
	Female	—	1	3
Other stranger	Male	61	60	55
	Female	18	18	16
No suspect¶•	Male	25	16	35
	Female	22	25	15
Total	Male	297	255	319
	Female	258	228	244

* As at 1 June 1985; figures are subject to revision as cases are dealt with by the police and by the courts, or as further information becomes available.
† Includes spouse's lover or lover's spouse or other associate.
‡ Includes cases where no suspect has been charged.
‖ All victims shown in the period covered by the table were police officers.
¶ Until a case is cleared up, the relationship is not classified, except where the victim was a police or prison officer on duty or where the offence was attributed to an act of terrorism.
• Excluding homicides of police or prison officer and those attributed to terrorism.

Merseyside Police Authority

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his inspectorate has investigated the geographical distribution of police manpower in the Merseyside police authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Deployment of manpower was included in the inspection of the Merseyside police which took place in November 1985, although there was no specific investigation as described by the hon. Member.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria his inspectorate uses to ensure that the terms of section 4*(a)* of the Police Act 1964 —maintenance of an adequate and efficient police force —are being met by the Merseyside police authority.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Under section 38 of the Police Act 1964, Her Majesty's Inspectors of constabulary have a duty to inspect and report to my right hon. Friend on the efficiency of police forces. Inspections bring out those points relevant to a police authority's responsibilities under section 4 of the Police Act 1964 for maintaining an adequate and efficient force and for providing buildings, vehicles, clothing and other equipment.

Coastal Resorts (Life-saving Appliances)

Mr. Lord asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to amend section 234 of the Public Health Act 1936 to make mandatory the provision by local authorities of life-saving appliances at coastal resorts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We are unaware of any reason for considering such a step. In the past it has not been thought appropriate for the Government to seek to influence local authorities over how they exercise their existing discretion under the 1936 Act.

Cinemas Act 1985 (Licences)

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about the relative costs incurred by the Greater London council as compared with other local authorities in issuing licences under the Cinemas Act 1985.

Mr. Mellor: The only information available to us derives from a survey which we undertook into costs incurred by local authorities in the financial year 1983-84. This indicated that the average cost incurred by 12 local authorities outside Greater London was £119 while that incurred by the GLC was at least four times as great (making allowance for applications submitted as a result of the coming into force of the Cinematograph (Amendment) Act 1982 which were either withdrawn or refused).

Coaches

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will discuss with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis the problems caused to the police arising from coaches parking and using random routes in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have consulted the Metropolitan police in the course of the review of parking and access for coaches in London being conducted by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. The review's report upon which we will seek comments, is to be published shortly.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* for the latest year for which information is available, for each right hon. and hon. Member, the arithmetic mean in days that his Department took to reply to letters.

Mr. Douglas Hurd: My Department received over 29,000 letters in 1985 for ministerial reply, the great majority of them from right hon. and hon. Members. To calculate the average time taken to handle correspondence for each right hon. and hon. Member would involve disproportionate expense.

A mean figure for the Department as a whole is of only limited value because of the wide range of cases. For the second half of 1985 it was 54 days, reflecting the fact that in a significant proportion of immigration cases final replies are not sent for a number of months while inquiries are being pursued or while an appeal is outstanding. Of the final replies sent in the second half of 1985, 34 per cent. went within a month of the arrival of the initial letter and a further 37 per cent. within two months.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. John Hunt asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Metropolitan police officers have been dismissed, required to resign or reduced in rank for each year from 1982 to 1984; and how many officers resigned voluntarily while under investigation for disciplinary matters or after disciplinary charges had been preferred.

Mr. Hurd: The information is as follows:

	1982	*1983*	*1984*
Dismissed	8	10	14
Required to resign	21	11	12
Reduction in rank	7	9	8
Resigned while under investigation or after disciplinary charges had been preferred	37	41	35

The figures are published in the annual reports of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what have been the average fines for convictions for Sunday trading in each of the last three years.

Mr. Waddington [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 March 1986, c.*535*]:

Records available to me, which may be incomplete, show the average fine imposed by magistrates courts in England and Wales for offences relating to Sunday trading as £44 in 1982, £100 in 1983 and £145 in 1984. Corresponding information for 1985 is not yet available.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

EC Regional Development Fund

Sir Richard Body asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has about grants, aids or subsidies from the French Government which are available to United Kingdom companies wishing to move to the area around Calais and the extent to which further assistance can be given out of the EEC regional development fund.

Mr. Alan Clark: United Kingdom companies may qualify for various forms of assistance offered by the French authorities depending on the type of project or activity which the companies wish to undertake. We understand that the Calais area is covered by the French Government's system of regional aid and that United Kingdom companies may be eligible for such aid if the various conditions of the system are met. It is, of course, for the French Government to decide which regionally-aided industry projects are submitted to the European Commission from this and other eligible regions in France for a contribution from the European regional development Fund (ERDF) towards the public expenditure cost of the domestic aid; and it is then for the Commission to decide which applications for ERDF contributions are accepted under the rules of the fund.

Insider Dealing

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action is being undertaken by his Department's investigating officers into allegations of organised insider dealing involving offshore companies on the stock exchange; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The activities of any Department's investigating officers are limited to persons who are identifiable and willing to assist with inquiries. Clause 147 of the Financial Services Bill proposes greatly to strengthen the powers available for investigating suspected insider dealing. My Department is taking part in discussions aimed at furthering international co-operation between regulatory authorities, which is an important factor in dealing with the abuse to which my hon. Friend alludes.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* for the latest year for which information is available for each hon. and right hon. Member, the arithmetic mean in days that his Department took to reply to letters.

Mr. Channon: The full information which the hon. Gentleman requests is not available other than at disproportionate cost.

In general, however, replies by the Secretary of State to letters from right hon. and hon. Members are dispatched within 10 to 15 working days from receipt of the original letter.

Consumer Credit Licensing

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry why the Office of Fair Trading has asked for an extension of £800,000 on its cash limit for computerising consumer credit licensing; and if he will specify what equipment is to be used for this project.

Mr. Howard: The computerisation of the consumer credit licensing operation is a matter for the Director General of Fair Trading, and I will ask him to write to the hon. Member.

Toys (Noise)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has made any study of the implications for consumer safety of the level of noise emanating from children's toys; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: My Department's safety research section has not undertaken any study on this subject nor to the best of its knowledge has any other organisation. Should the hon. Member wish to make specific proposals for research into noisy toys, I shall be glad to consider them.

Closures (Northern Region)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the number of closures in the northern region notified to him in each year since 1979.

Mr. Howard: The information is not available in the exact form requested. The only readily available data were published in *British Business*, 18 January 1985, which is available in the Library.

Business Failures

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many business failures have been reported in each year since 1979.

Mr. Howard: The information is as follows:

Insolvencies

Year	*England and Wales*		*Scotland*	
	Company liquidations	*Bankruptcies*	*Company liquidations*	*Sequestrations (equivalent of bankruptcies)*
1979	4,537	3,500	238	106
1980	6,890	4,038	379	150
1981	8,596	5,151	438	181
1982	12,067	5,700	503	213

Year	England and Wales		Scotland	
	Company liquidations	Bankruptcies	Company liquidations	Sequestrations (equivalent of bankruptcies)
1983	13,406	7,032	521	282
1984	13,721	8,229	523	292
1985*	14,895	6,772	537	298

* Provisional.

Bankruptcy and sequestration figures include receiving orders and administration orders and the total is the net number of cases administered after consolidations and rescisions. They relate to all individuals and partnerships and it is estimated that unincorporated businesses account for between 75 and 80 per cent. of the total.

Liquidations

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many firms in *(a)* the west midlands and *(b)* the black country area of the west midlands have gone into liquidation since May 1979; and what was the percentage change over the seven years prior to May 1979 in the two areas, respectively.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 March 1986]: I regret that official figures of company liquidations are not available by area. The provisional total number of bankruptcies administered in the years 1979 to 1985 inclusive by county courts in the whole of the west midlands county was 2,009 and in the black country area 696. The black country area is defined as that part of the west midlands county covered by the courts in Dudley, Walsall, Wolverhampton and West Bromwich, that is omitting those in Birmingham, Coventry and Stourbridge. In west midlands the annual average was 56 per cent. higher than in the two years 1977-78 and in the black country it was 57 per cent. Comparisons are not given with the previous seven years because of a break in continuity at the end of 1976. The figures relate to all individuals and partnerships; for England and Wales as a whole, unincorporated businesses account for between 75 and 80 per cent. of the total.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Local Authorities (Capital Expenditure)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science which local authorities have made representations to his Department concerning their capital expenditure allocations for 1986-87.

Mr. Dunn: Written representations have been received from the authorities listed.

Avon
Berkshire
Brent
Bromley
Cambridgeshire
Cleveland
Cumbria
Derbyshire
Doncaster
Dudley
Ealing
East Sussex
Gloucestershire
Hertfordshire
Hillingdon
ILEA
Kirklees
Leicestershire
Manchester
Newham
North Tyneside
Nottinghamshire
Oxfordshire
Rotherham
Tameside
Waltham Forest
West Sussex
Wirral

Nursery Schools

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many nursery schools there are in Lincolnshire; how many pupils they have; and what percentage of the total nursery school age population that represents.

Mr. Dunn: There were four maintained nursery schools in Lincolnshire in January 1985 attended by 335 full and part-time pupils. This represents 2·5 per cent. of the estimated population aged three and four years in Lincolnshire.

Local Authorities (Education Expenditure)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), 4 March, *Official Report*, column *112*, which local education authorities did not raise their general education spending in real terms between 1982-83 and 1983-84; and if he will indicate the extent to which these local education authorities deviated from the average national rise in spending.

Mr. Dunn: Local education authorities in England spent the same amount, in real terms, in 1982-83 as in 1983-84. The extent to which individual authorities spent less than the average is given in the following table.

Authority	Real terms reduction net expenditure between 1982-83 and 1983-84 Percentage
Sutton	−1
Richmond-upon-Thames	−1
Tameside	−1
Waltham Forest	−1
Humberside	−1
East Sussex	−1
West Sussex	−1
Northumberland	−1
Barking	−1
Kirklees	−1
Cheshire	−1
Hampshire	−1
Suffolk	−1
Trafford	−1
Buckinghamshire	−1
Calderdale	−1

Authority	Real terms reduction net expenditure between 1982-83 and 1983-84 Percentage
Kent	−1
Cornwall	−1
Salop	−1
Wolverhampton	−1
Cleveland	−1
Berkshire	−1
Bromley	−2
Durham	−2
Hertfordshire	−2
Barnet	−2
Havering	−2
North Tyneside	−2
Croydon	−2
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	−2
Warwickshire	−2
Avon	−2
Solihull	−2
Kingston-upon-Thames	−2
Hereford and Worcester	−2
Bexley	−2
Walsall	−3
Liverpool	−3
Surrey	−3
Manchester	−3
Isles of Scilly	−3
Redbridge	−3
Merton	−4
Bury	−6

Note: Real terms are the cash figures for 1982-83 repriced to 1983-84 prices using the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator.

Higher Education Policy

Mr. Kilfedder asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the effect of Her Majesty's Government's higher education policy on the morale of university staff and the quality of education.

Mr. Walden: Since May 1985 my right hon. Friend has received more than 1,900 representations about higher education policies generally and over 2,500 others specifically about the pay of university staff. Most have argued for additional funding for higher education so as to maintain and improve the quality of higher education, access to it, or the pay and morale of staff working in higher education.

Student Awards

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total or estimated total cost to parents of assessed contributions to mandatory student grants for each year since 1979-80 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1985-86 prices; and if he will provide forecasts for future years.

Mr. Walden: The information is as follows:

Mandatory Awards (England and Wales)
Assessed Parental Contributions (£ million)

	Academic Year	Cash	1985-86
Actual	1979-80	84	135
	1980-81	98	136
	1981-82	127	158
	1982-83	155	181
	1983-84	171	190
Estimated	1984-85	215	228
Forecast	1985-86	252	252
	1986-87	267	257

Note: Repricing is based on the RPI as at September of each academic year. The RPI annual increase to September 1986 is assumed to be 4 per cent.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the number of students on discretionary awards or local authority bursaries as well as the numbers of students who receive no award who will not receive the £36 compensation as a result of the proposed changes in student entitlement to welfare benefits.

Mr. Walden: Students studying from home will be largely unaffected by the proposed changes in entitlement to welfare benefits, so it is proposed to limit compensation through the student grant to award holders living away from home. The amount of compensation to be paid to mandatory award holders has yet to be finally decided. There are approximately 70,000 award holders from England and Wales in higher education who live at home, and will therefore receive no compensation. In the case of students on discretionary awards and bursaries, it will be for the award-making bodies to decide what compensation should be paid. There are also some 90,000 students who could be affected by the proposals and who study without any award, but it is not known how many of them study away from home.

Physical Science Teachers

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what proportions of secondary school teachers of physical sciences in England and Wales are estimated to be *(a)* over 50 years of age and *(b)* over 40 years of age;

(2) what proportions of secondary school mathematics teachers in England and Wales are estimated to be *(a)* over 50 years of age and *(b)* over 40 years of age.

Mr. Chris Patten: The estimates given are derived from a survey of a sample of maintained secondary schools in England carried out by this Department in 1984. Corresponding information about Welsh secondary schools is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

England full-time teachers teaching named subject in maintained secondary schools, 1984

	Estimated percentage who were	
	50 years of age and over	40 years of age and over
Mathematics	18	44
Chemistry*	13	40
Physics*	14	42

* Some physics and chemistry teaching is also carried out by teachers of "General Science" or "Other Science" where these subjects cannot be separately distinguished.

Dyslexia

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* those local education authorities in England which recognise dyslexia as a malady requiring special attention.

Mr. Dunn: The Department does not collect this information.

GCSE

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what provision has been made in extra rate support grant or education support grant for local education authorities to purchase new books and equipment as a result of the changes in the examination system to the general certificate of secondary education;

(2) what extra resources have been allocated to local education authorities for the introduction of the general certificate of secondary education.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) on 13 March at column *542*.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the proportion of teachers who have completed training for the general certificate of secondary education examination.

Mr. Chris Patten: The programme of phase 2 of GCSE training for subject representatives is now well under way. From information available to the Department and the Secondary Examination Council it would appear that attendance at these seminars has been of the order of 50 to 60 per cent. My right hon. Friend, in his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr Thompson) on 13 March at column *542*, announced further measures designed to ensure that all teachers of the GCSE received appropriate training for the new examination courses.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has received from local authorities which are having difficulties in implementing the new general certificate of secondary education examination.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Department has received a number of representations from local education authorities about the introduction of the GCSE raising, in particular, concerns about the training programme and resources for schools. My right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North, (Mr. Thompson) on 13 March, at column *542*. set out three measures in direct response to these requests.

Somerset University

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department recognises Somerset university, trading as Somerset University Independent of Ilminster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: This institution is not among those empowered to award degrees by Royal Charter or Act of Parliament. Independent further education establishments which cater only for students over 16 are not required to register with this Department and the Department has no statutory control over them. The Government deplores any trade in bogus degrees and proposals for possible action to curtail the activities of operators in this field are under consideration.

Adult and Continuing Education

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on adult and continuing education.

Mr. Walden: I cannot add further to my reply of 4 February at columns *128-29* to the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) and other hon. Members.

PRIME MINISTER

Good Neighbourliness Campaign

Q23. **Sir David Price** asked the Prime Minister if she will sponsor a national campaign of good neighbourliness to help the aged, the frail, the disabled and the lonely and particularly those who live alone; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I am always happy to promote good neighbourliness, but experience suggests that it can most effectively be developed by local action. Our policy therefore is to encourage social services departments to draw on and develop all the resources available in the community to assist people who need support, including the support that may be provided by vigilant and caring neighbours.

Disabled People

Q119. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Prime Minister if she will meet leaders of the main disablement organisations to discuss proposals for further legislation to safeguard the interests of disabled people; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: My ministerial colleagues meet leaders of the main disablement organisations from time to time, and indeed my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services did so yesterday, to discuss the Social Security Bill which is at present before Parliament. We are always happy to consider any suggestions, on legislation or other matters, which they put forward, but I do not believe a further meeting is now necessary.

Mr. Ian MacGregor (Memoirs)

Q151. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if she will seek to obtain for the library of 10 Downing street a copy of Mr. Ian MacGregor's memoirs; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I understand no such book has yet been published.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Prime Minister if the statement by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on 10 March that the Anglo-Irish agreement was a bulwark against a United Ireland represents the policy of Her Majesty's Government.

The Prime Minister: The Government hope and believe that Northern Ireland will remain part of the United Kingdom.

Chancellor Kohl

Mr. Freeson asked the Prime Minister when she next expects to meet Chancellor Kohl of West Germany.

The Prime Minister: At the Tokyo economic summit from 4 to 6 May.

Engagements

Mr. Rogers asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 18 March.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 18 March.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 18 March.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 18 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Abdul Haq

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement about her meeting with the Afghan resistance leader Abdul Haq.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Abdul Haq gave me an account of the brave activities of the resistance in the war against the occupation of Afghanistan. He emphasised that the resistance would continue until the Afghan people were free to enjoy the right of self-determination and the refugees could return in honour and safety to their homes. I made clear the Government's full support for the efforts of the Afghan people to free themselves of foreign occupation as well as for the efforts of the United Nations Secretary General's representative to find a negotiated settlement on the basis of successive United Nations resolutions. I also made clear our belief that the key to such a settlement remains the withdrawal of the Soviet troops. Until then we will continue to give what help we can to the victims of the occupation.

WALES

Farms

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many farms run on a full-time basis there are in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: 12,416 holdings were classified as whole-time in June 1985.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had pressing for a delay of one year in the introduction of the general certificate of secondary education in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Representations have been received from one local education authority, the local authorities committee of the WJEC, the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association, a county group of secondary headteachers, a county branch of the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers, the governing bodies of eight secondary schools, a federation of parent teacher associations, one individual parent teacher association and nine individuals.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate for each local education authority in Wales of the cost of providing new materials for the new

general certificate of secondary education examination courses; and by what mechanism he proposes to make new funds available to these authorities to meet this additional spending requirement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Educational provision is for individual local education authorities to determine on the basis of local needs and priorities. However, given the importance of this reform, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science announced on 13 March at column 542, that we propose to use the education support grant mechanism to assist secondary schools with purchase of books and equipment.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied that adequate provision has been made in Wales for retraining teachers prior to September for starting to teach courses leading to the general certificate of secondary education examinations in 1988.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Yes. The programme of in-service training established by the WJEC is currently under way. That programme is to receive further support, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science announced on 13 March, at column 542.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what indications he has recieved from the Welsh Joint Education Committee concerning the ability of the education sector in Wales to cope with the new general certificate of secondary education examinations in 1988.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The local authorities committee of the WJEC has called for the postponement of the introduction of the GCSE by one year. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science made clear on 13 March, at column 542, that is not an option.

Examinations

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has received from the Manpower Services Commission for changes in the curriculum of examinations in Wales; and if he will make a statement as to the role of the Manpower Services Commission in this context.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: None.

Voluntary Services Councils

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales, how much funding is provided by his Department in the current year for each of the county voluntary services councils in Wales, respectively; and whether there is any stipulation in making such grants that any services need to be provided for community and town councils within their area.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Funding approved for 1985-86 is as follows:

Organisation	*Grant* £
Clwyd Voluntary Services Council	57,282
Dyfed Association of Voluntary Services	63,391
Glamorgan Community Services Council	17,395
Gwent Community Services Council	31,642
Gwynedd Rural Council	73,816
Powys Rural Council	61,232
South Glamorgan Intervol	13,869
West Glamorgan Community Services Council	32,827

The provision of services for community and town councils is not a condition of grant.

Workplace Cancer Screening

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will allocate additional funds to Welsh health authorities for the purpose of introducing a comprehensive workplace cancer screening service throughout Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Cervical cytology is at present the only population based cancer screening service. It is managed by district health authorities, which decide how the service can be provided most effectively. Four hundred thousand pounds of central funding has been earmarked for the development of cancer screening services in Wales in 1986-87 and we are considering with health authorities how this money should be used.

EC (Price Proposals)

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to visit Brussels during the next few weeks to discuss the implications of the European Economic Community price proposals for Welsh agriculture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to visit Brussels in the immediate future. The United Kingdom representation in discussions with European Economic Community Ministers on the common agricultural policy will take full account of the interests of Wales.

Fishing Industry (Cardigan Bay)

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the state of the fishing industry in the Cardigan bay catchment area.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Lobsters are the most important species for the local fishing industry in Cardigan bay. Measures have been introduced since 1981 aimed at conserving stocks of lobsters and scallops, including those in Cardigan bay. The industry will benefit also from improvements to harbour facilities at Aberystwyth, which will enable more fishing vessels to use the harbour and better marketing arrangements to be made there. My right hon. Friend has approved contributions of £100,000 by the Welsh Office and £125,000 by the Development Board for Rural Wales towards the cost of the work at Aberystwyth, which is expected to be finished this summer.

Landfill Sites

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each district council in Wales the number of landfill sites currently in use for controlled tipping.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is given in the following table:

Local authority	Number of local authority sites with council resolution	Number of private sites licenced by local authority
Aberconwy	1	2
Alyn and Deeside	1	17
Arfon	1	2
Blaenau Gwent	1	0
Brecknock	7	0
Cardiff	2	5
Carmarthen	1	0
Ceredigion	5	2
Colwyn	1	2
Cynon Valley	1	4
Delyn	1	7
Dinefwr	1	0
Dwyfor	2	24
Glyndwr	4	1
Islwyn	4	3
Llanelli	2	4
Lliw Valley	2	2
Meirionnydd	5	2
Merthyr Tydfil	2	1
Monmouth	2	2
Montgomery	2	2
Neath	2	1
Newport	1	24
Ogwr	1	3
Port Talbot	0	2
Preseli	2	12
Radnor	2	1
Rhondda	2	1
Rhuddlan	0	0
Rhymney Valley	2	5
South Pembrokeshire	0	14
Swansea	4	14
Taff Ely	2	5
Torfaen	2	4
Vale of Glamorgan	1	8
Wrexham Maelor	1	15
Ynys Mon-Isle of Anglesey	2	4

Schools Inspectors

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those schools in Wales whose in-depth reports have been carried out by Her Majesty's inspectors of schools since these reports have been made public; and if he will distinguish between primary and secondary schools and give the date of publication.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is given in the following tables:

Primary school reports published since 1 January 1983

Publication date	Name of school
21 February 1983	Nantymoel nursery school, Mid Glamorgan
25 February 1983	Cefn wood county primary school, Gwent
25 February 1983	Albert road primary school, South Glamorgan
23 January 1984	Cross Ash county primary school, Gwent
23 January 1984	Brynderi county primary school, Gwent
23 January 1984	Pentwyn county primary school, Gwent
21 February 1984	Birchgrove county primary school, Cardiff, South Glamorgan
12 July 1984	Llanbedr voluntary primary school, Ruthin, Clwyd
18 September 1984	Cyffylliog primary school, Clwyd
3 December 1984	Newton county primary school, West Glamorgan
3 December 1984	Sandycroft county primary school, Clwyd
3 December 1984	Cardigan junior school, Dyfed
11 December 1984	St. Mary the Virgin church in Wales (aided) primary school, Cardiff, South Glamorgan
20 December 1984	Abertillery junior school, Gwent
21 February 1985	Guilsfield county primary school and Cegidfa community and youth centre, Powys
28 February 1985	Cwmtwrch county primary school, Powys
26 March 1985	Ynyswen Welsh school, Treorchy, Mid Glamorgan
1 May 1985	Duffryn junior mixed school, Gwent
9 May 1985	Llanrhidian county primary school, West Glamorgan
13 June 1985	St. Fagan's church in Wales aided primary school, South Glamorgan
17 June 1985	Nannerch voluntary primary school, Clwyd
24 June 1985	St. Illtyd's RC aided primary school, Swansea, West Glamorgan
24 June 1985	Nantgaredig county primary school, Dyfed
3 July 1985	Ninian park county primary school, South Glamorgan
4 July 1985	Taliesin county primary school, Clwyd
4 July 1985	Rhosymedre county primary junior school, Clwyd
17 July 1985	Blaengarn primary school, Mid Glamorgan
18 July 1985	Llandeilo county primary school, Dyfed
16 September 1985	Coity primary school, Mid Glamorgan
16 September 1985	Glyncollen county primary school, Morriston, West Glamorgan
16 September 1985	Cilffriw county primary school, West Glamorgan
17 September 1985	Borras park infants school, Wrexham, Clwyd
26 September 1985	Croeserw primary school, West Glamorgan
14 October 1985	Fishguard junior school, Dyfed
31 October 1985	Kitchener primary school, Cardiff, South Glamorgan
31 October 1985	Ysgol Glan Cegin, Maesgeirchen, Bangor Gwynedd
25 November 1985	Langstone primary school, Gwent
27 November 1985	Grosmont county primary school, Gwent
11 December 1985	Llanrhaedr-ym-Mochnant county primary school, Clwyd
16 December 1985	Ffynonbedr primary school, Dyfed
20 January 1986	Bryncethin junior school, Mid Glamorgan
21 January 1986	Llanilltud Fawr primary school, South Glamorgan
12 February 1986	Radnor Valley county primary school, Powys
18 February 1986	Llwyncrwn primary school, Beddau, Mid Glamorgan
27 February 1986	Ysgol Gymraeg Sant Ffransis, Barry, South Glamorgan
3 March 1986	Irfon Valley county primary school, Garth, Powys
6 March 1986	Prendergast junior school, Haverfordwest, Dyfed

Secondary Schools
School reports published since 1 January 1983

Publication date	Name of school
21 February 1983	Cyfarthfa Comprehensive School, Mid Glamorgan
21 February 1983	Ysgol Y Moelwyn Comprehensive School, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Gwynedd
25 February 1983	Willows High School, Cardiff, South Glamorgan
28 June 1983	Brynhyfryd Comprehensive School, Clwyd
28 June 1983	Rhyl High School, Clwyd
8 July 1983	Amman Valley Comprehensive School, Ammanford
8 July 1983	Caldicot Comprehensive School, Chepstow, Gwent
13 October 1983	Pentrehafod Comprehensive School, West Glamorgan
30 November 1983	Llanfair Caereinion High School, Powys
19 December 1983	St. Ilan Comprehensive School, Caerphilly, Mid Glamorgan
25 January 1984	Risca Comprehensive School, Gwent
28 June 1984	Bassaleg Comprehensive School, Newport, Gwent
10 July 1984	St. Richard Gwyn RC High School, Flint, Clwyd
10 July 1984	Cefn Hengoed Comprehensive School, West Glamorgan

Publication date	Name of school
18 September 1984	Llangefni Comprehensive School, Gwynedd
15 November 1984	Cynffig Comprehensive School, Kenfig Hill, Mid Glamorgan
4 December 1984	Cwrt Sart (11-16) Comprehensive School, Neath, West Glamorgan
23 January 1985	Fitzalan Comprehensive School, Cardiff, South Glamorgan
24 June 1985	St. Joseph's RC Comprehensive School, Port Talbot, West Glamorgan
16 September 1985	Newtown High School, Powys
26 September 1985	Dyffryn Comprehensive School, Newport, Gwent
29 October 1985	Eirias High School, Clwyd
20 January 1986	Porthcawl Comprehensive School, Mid Glamorgan
3 February 1986	Cardiff High School, South Glamorgan
13 February 1986	St. David's High School, Wrexham, Clwyd

Special Schools
School reports published since 1 January 1983

Publication date	Name of school*
20 April 1983	Ysgol Treborth, Gwynedd
22 March 1984	Brynllywarch Residential School, Powys
22 March 1984	Cyfronydd Residential School, Powys
22 March 1984	Cedewain School, Powys
27 June 1984	Ysgol Y Dolau, Highmead School, Llanybydder, Dyfed
23 January 1985	Ysgol PLas Brondyffryn, Denbigh, Clwyd
13 March 1986	Ysgol Penybont, Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan

*It is not possible to divide into primary and secondary schools.

Independent Schools
School reports published since 1 January 1983

Publication date	Name of school*
19 July 1984	Dumbarton House School, Swansea, West Glamorgan
20 September 1984	Lindisfarne College, Ruabon, Clwyd
9 December 1985	Brookland Hall School (Powys College), Powys
18 February 1986	Clive Hall School, Cardiff, South Glamorgan

*It is not possible to divide into primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools employed in Wales for each of the last five years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is as follows:

Number of HMIs (all grades) as at 31 December

Year	Number
1981	54
1982	51
1983	47
1984	55
1985	51

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales what action his Department takes to monitor the implementaton of recommendations made by Her Majesty's inspectors of schools in their in-depth reports of conditions and practices in Welsh schools.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The arrangements applying since 1 January 1983 for following up reports made by Her Majesty's inspectors of schools are set out in Welsh Office circular 11/83, a copy of which is in the Library. Further to that circular, the Department wrote to all local education authorities in Wales on 2 July 1985 informing them that the response period to reports on maintained establishments would be specified separately for each report and would not be less than three months.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the current salary scales of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The current salary scales are:

Grade 4 (HM Chief Inspector) £	Grade 5 (HM Staff Inspector) £	Grade 6 (HM Inspector) £
27,584	20,964	17,000
28,334	22,387	17,804
29,084	23,341	19,204
	24,296	20,796
	25,533	22,926

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has about the number of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools in Wales who gained, at the advanced level of the General Certificate of Education examination *(a)* three grade As, *(b)* two grade As, *(c)* one grade A and *(d)* no grade A.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is not available.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools in Wales who have had *(a)* no experience of teaching in primary schools, *(b)* up to three years teaching experience in primary schools, *(c)* three to six years teaching in primary schools and *(d)* more than six years teaching in primary schools.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The informaton in respect of all grades of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools currently employed in Wales is as follows:

	Number of HMIs
(a) No experience of teaching in primary schools	47
(b) Up to three years experience	1
(c) Three to six years experience	1
(d) More than six years experience	4

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools in Wales who have had *(a)* no experience of teaching in secondary schools, *(b)* up to three years teaching experience in secondary schools, *(c)* three to six years teaching in secondary schools and *(d)* more than six years teaching in secondary schools.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information in respect of all grades of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools currently employed in Wales is as follows:

	Number of HMIs
(a) No experience of teaching in secondary schools	8
(b) Up to three years experience	9
(c) Three to six years experience	11
(d) More than six years experience	25

Dyslexia

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* those education authorities in Wales which recognise dyslexia as a malady requiring special attention.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Department does not collect this information.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* for the year ended 31 December 1985, for each right hon. and hon. Member representing constituencies in Wales, the longest number of working days that his Department took to reply to letters.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Local Government Act 1974 (Review)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has responded to the third review of part III of the Local Government Act 1974 conducted by the Commission for Local Administration for Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I have issued my response to the commission and have placed copies in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Human Rights

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid previously provided has been cancelled, and in which countries, because of human rights violations since 1979.

Mr. Raison: Human rights considerations comprise one factor taken into account in deciding how bilateral aid funds should be allocated. Since 1979 we have provided no new aid to the Governments of Vietnam and Afghanistan because of human rights violations and other related issues. We have, however, continued to provide assistance to Afghan refugees through international and British voluntary agencies and through training in Britain, and we have contributed to United Nations programmes in support of Indo-Chinese refugees, including the civilian population of the Thai/Cambodian border who have fled from Vietnamese occupying forces.

Lomé Convention (Aid)

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide a list of the countries receiving aid or loans under the Lomé conventions of the EEC in the financial years since 1979, showing the moneys involved.

Mr. Raison: The information requested is as follows:

Commitments Under the Second Lome Convention

	From the Fifth European Development Fund 1979-September 1984 million ecu	*From the own resources of the European Investment Bank 1979-December 1984 million ecu*
Antigua-Barbuda	0·4	—
Bahamas	2·0	—
Barbados	3·2	4·0
Belize	1·0	2·0
Benin	34·7	13·5
Botswana	22·6	19·0
Burkina Faso	74·8	—
Burundi	65·2	—
Cameroon	79·6	73·7
Cape Verde	22·0	—
Central African Republic	56·1	—
Chad	72·1	—
Congo	32·5	4·0
Ivory Coast	97·4	34·2
Djibouti	7·1	—
Dominica	9·6	—
Comores	16·9	—
Ethiopia	198·0	—
Fiji	22·4	12·0
Gabon	25·0	32·0
Gambia	27·9	—
Ghana	120·4	—
Grenada	9·5	—
Guinea Conakry	61·1	7·5
Guinea Bissau	25·5	—
Equatorial Guinea	4·8	—
Guyana	20·0	—
Jamaica	34·4	4·0
Kenya	100·6	23·5
Kiribati	3·0	—
Lesotho	32·6	—
Liberia	21·4	3·5
Madagascar	80·7	—
Malawi	82·5	—
Mali	95·8	—
Mauritania	48·0	—
Mauritius	21·7	4·0
Niger	89·5	10·0
Nigeria	33·2	40·0
Papua New Guinea	67·6	47·9
Rwanda	77·9	—
Saint Christopher—Nevis	2·6	—
Saint Lucia	6·3	—
Saint Vincent	4·6	—
Sao Tomé and Principe	11·2	—
Senegal	132·2	21·0
Seychelles	4·8	—
Sierra Leone	49·9	—
Solomon Islands	10·0	—
Somalia	78·5	—
Sudan	135·6	—
Surinam	9·9	—
Swaziland	28·2	7·0
Tanzania	127·5	—
Togo	70·2	4·4
Tonga	10·8	—
Trinidad and Tobago	8·1	8·0
Tuvalu	1·3	—
Uganda	74·9	—
Vanuata	14·7	—
Western Samoa	14·7	—
Zaire	138·7	—
Zambia	101·1	31·5
Zimbabwe	54·9	35·0
Regional Projects	421·2	5·0
Totals	3412·4	446·7

The figures show commitments under the second Lomé convention. They do not include commitments made since

1979 under the first Lomé/ convention nor commitments from the European Community budget (such as food aid). Regional projects are shown separately in the table and are not allocated by country. Figures are not available on a financial year basis.

ENERGY

Sizewell Inquiry

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether the whole of the report of the Sizewell inquiry will be published simultaneously.

Mr. Goodlad: Yes.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he intends to place in the Library a copy of the interdepartmental review of measures to increase energy efficiency for low-income householders, as recommended in paragraph 24 of the eighth report of the Energy Committee, session 1984-85.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) on 10 March at column *659*.

Chapelcross and Calder Hall

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate had sight of all relevant reports and accompanying correspondence from Mr. Peter Phelan before signing off the long-term safety reviews for Chapelcross and Calder Hall power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 March 1986, c. *85-86*]: I am advised by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate that the responsibility for making a safety case in respect of any matter concerned with a licensed nuclear installation rests with the licensee. Any report which contains the licensee's safety case must contain adequate technical and scientific justification of his arguments, and all references must be identified and made available to the NII. Where a licensee uses consultants to assist him in carrying out an appropriate analysis, he is required to make available only those documents or correspondence necessary to support his safety case. The NII would not expect to receive any copy of correspondence between a licensee and an individual member of the consultant's staff unless it formed a necessary part of a reference. The assessment submitted by BNFL to the NII contained no reference or correspondence which can be identified as arising from Mr. Peter Phelan.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate has taken to satisfy itself of the capacity of Chapelcross and Calder Hall nuclear power stations to withstand seismological shocks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 March 1986, c. *85-86*]: I am advised by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate that it asked BNFL to submit assessments of the effect of seismic events on the nuclear power stations at Calder Hall and Chapelcross as part of BNFL's comprehensive long term safety reviews. Because of the special expertise required to analyse seismic events and their potential effects on reactor structures, BNFL employed consultants to assist them in this task. Similarly, the NII has employed its own independent consultants in order to satisfy itself about the adequacy of BNFL's assessments.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will specify the magnitude of seismic events expected to occur at least once in a nominal 40-year operating life at Chapelcross or Calder Hall :

(2) if he will specify the most severe seismic event expected to occur at Chapelcross or Calder Hall in a nominal 40-year operating life.

Mr. Goodlad: [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 March 1986, c. *85-86*]: I am advised by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate that seismic events are qualified in terms of their severity and their frequency of occurrence. Earthquakes which would be sufficiently severe to damage Calder Hall or Chapelcross are extremely rare. The probability of an earthquake reduces very rapidly as its magnitude increases. It is estimated that the peak free field horizontal acceleration which would occur in a normal 40-year life for these stations is about 0·035g.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will specify the maximum mangnitude of seismic events which, in the light of recent research studies, could be expected to permit the nuclear reactors at Chapelcross and Calder Hall to survive, be safely shut down and subsequently be maintained in safe condition.

Mr. Goodlad: [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 March 1986, c. *85-86*] I am advised by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate that the seismic structural assessments carried out by BNFL for the Calder Hall and Chapelcross reactor demonstrate that the reactor could be safely shut down and maintained in a safe condition following an earthquake with a peak free field horizontal acceleration of 0·11g although some damage to non-essential service buildings could occur.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Health and Social Services

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing separately for (i) hospital and community health services, (ii) family practitioner services and (iii) social services, actual and planned expenditure in Northern Ireland for the years 1978-79 to 1988-89 in *(a)* cash prices, *(b)* cost terms and *(c)* volume terms, and showing the percentage increases over 1978-79 on a basis consistent with table 2.12 of Cmnd. 9702-II.

Mr. Needham: The following tables contain the information requested. The expenditure figures shown are net of patient charges, as are those in table 2.12 of Cmnd. 9702-II.

Expenditure on central health and miscellaneous services is excluded.

1. Hospital and community health services actual and planned expenditure

*£ million**

	Cash	*Adjusted by GDP deflator (1984-85 prices)*	*Adjusted by hospital and community health services pay and price factors (1984-85 prices)†*
1978-79	208	370	405
1979-80	253	385	410
1980-81	321	412	408
1981-82	360	420	424
1982-83	380	414	421
1983-84	406	423	429
1984-85	426	426	426
1985-86	447	426	n.a.
1986-87	470	428	n.a.
1987-88	488	430	n.a.
1988-89	509	435	n.a.
Percentage increase over the period‡	145	17·6	5·2

2. Family practitioner services actual and planned expenditure

*£ million**

	Cash	*Adjusted by GDP deflator (1984-85 prices)*	*Adjusted by family practitioner services pay and price factors (1984-85 prices)†*
1978-79	52	93	110
1979-80	60	91	108
1980-81	75	96	108
1981-82	87	101	110
1982-83	99	108	113
1983-84	109	114	118
1984-85	115	115	115
1985-86	121	115	n.a.
1986-87	130	118	n.a.
1987-88	136	120	n.a.
1988-89	143	122	n.a.
Percentage increase over the period‡	175	31·2	4·5

3. Personal social services actual and planned expenditure

*£ million**

	Cash	*Adjusted by GDP deflator (1984-85 prices)*	*Adjusted by personal social services pdy and price factors (1984-85 prices)†*
1978-79	43	77	81
1979-80	55	84	88
1980-81	69	88	91
1981-82	78	91	92
1982-83	85	93	93
1983-84	92	96	96
1984-85	95	95	95
1985-86	100	95	n/a
1986-87	105	96	n/a
1987-88	110	97	n/a
1988-89	115	98	n/a
Percentage increase over the period‡	167	27·3	17·3

* In Northern Ireland, the services are administered by health and social services boards and presentation of separate hospital and community health services and personal social services figures therefore involve a calculated attribution of certain costs, especially those for common services.

† No separate record is maintained of pay and price movements within the health service in Northern Ireland. The indices used are those calculated by the Department of Health and Social Security from English data, and which are available only to 1984-85.

‡ Percentage increase in figures adjusted by NHS factors covers the years 1978-79 to 1984-85 only.

Asylum Seekers (Benefits)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many asylum seekers are currently in receipt of benefits; and what has been the cost for the last two years.

Mr. Needham: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Intimidation

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what protection against intimidation by extremist and paramilitary organisations is being given to members of health and social services and education and library boards attending meetings and other duties; and whether he is satisfied that the boards' functions are being properly performed.

Mr. Scott: It would not be sensible to describe measures taken to protect individuals. My right hon. Friend is satisfied that the boards' functions are being properly performed.

Harland and Wolff

Mr. Trotter asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much assistance from public funds has been received by Harland and Wolff since 1 April 1985 *(a)* by way of payments from the intervention fund, *(b)* by way of interest-free unsecured loans and *(c)* otherwise.

Dr. Boyson: Since 1 April 1985 Harland and Wolff has received the following assistance from public funds:

(a) £4,250,000 in payments from the intervention fund;

(b) £31,384,868 in interest-free unsecured loans; and

(c) £1,549,888 of standard regional grants.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Hypothermia

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the figures indicating the number of people in the United Kingdom who have died from hypothermia each year since 1978.

Mr. Whitney: Information on the numbers of deaths with any mention of hypothermia on the death certificate, irrespective of whether it did or did not appear as the underlying cause of death is not available for Northern Ireland prior to 1985. The table, therefore, shows figures for Great Britain from 1978 to 1985, and for the United Kingdom for 1985.

Numbers of deaths with any mention of hypothermia, Great Britain 1978 to 1985 United Kingdom 1985

Persons, all ages

Year	Great Britain	United Kingdom
1978	913	n.a.
1979	1,122	n.a.
1980	795	n.a.
1981	939	n.a.
1982	860	n.a.
1983	717	n.a.
1984	731	n.a.
1985	1,057	1,084

* Figures for 1985 are provisional.
n.a. = not available.

Medical Posts (Vacancies)

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about current vacant positions in the medical posts of consultant, and related appointments, nurses and other associated medical appointments within health districts in inner London, by district.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that information is not collected centrally on vacancies by district health authorities except for consultant posts in teaching districts.

The latest available such figures are as follows:

Inner London District Health Authority	Consultant posts without permanent holders	Occupied by locums	Not occupied by locums
Hampstead	1·0	1·0	0·0
Tower Hamlets	2·6	0·5	2·1
Camberwell	4·4	4·0	0·4
Lewisham and North Southwark	5·0	2·8	2·2
Wandsworth	7·1	2·7	4·4

Note: All figures are whole-time equivalent as at 30 September 1985.

Community Homes

Mr. Barnett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many community homes with education there are in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales; and what was the equivalent figure in 1980;

(2) how many community homes with education places are available on average per local authority possessing a social service function in England and Wales; and what was the equivalent figure in 1980.

Mr. Whitney: The information available is given in the table.

Community homes with education on the premises

As at 31 March	Number of Homes England	Number of Homes Wales	Average number of places England and Wales
1980	106	7	48
1985	*85	4	*28

* Estimated

Observation and Assessment Centres

Mr. Barnett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many observation and assessment centres there are in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales; and what were the equivalent figures in 1980;

(2) how many observation and assessment centre places are available on average per local authority in England and Wales possessing a social service function; and what was the equivalent figure for 1980.

Mr. Whitney: The information available is given in the table.

Observation and assessment centres

As at 31 March	Number of centres England	Number of centres Wales	Average number of places England†
1980	195	14	50
1985	140*	N/A†	30*

* Estimated
† Data for Wales are not now collected centrally.

Family Practitioner Committees

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of Wednesday 15 January, *Official Report*, column *606*, whether the statutory auditors have issued reports on inadequate provision for internal audit in any further family practitioner committees.

Mr. Hayhoe: Further to the family practitioner committees identified in my reply to the hon. Member on 15 January, at columns *606-7*, statutory auditors have issued reports on the inadequate provision for internal audit at the following committees:

Barnet FPC
Hillingdon FPC
Redbridge and Waltham Forest FPC
City and East London FPC
Croydon FPC

An additional sum of £258,000 has been made available to FPCs in 1986-87, on a selective basis, for the development of internal audit arrangements.

Hospitals

Sir Gerard Vaughan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hospital in-patients and out-patients received treatment in 1978 in the Oxfordshire health region and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is given in the table.

NHS hospitals, Oxford Regional Health Authority

	1978	1984
In-patient cases	247,943	284,583
Day cases	23,146	29,931
Out-patient new attendances	345,740	375,175

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the cost of paying supplementary benefit to students in respect of the first three days of their holiday; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Unemployed claimants of supplementary benefit normally receive benefit from two days after their "signing day", which is usually designated according to the first letter of the claimant's surname. The period between the date of claim and the official signing day will therefore vary and no reliable estimate is possible of he cost of paying students from their date of claim. In cases of hardship, payments can be made under the urgent cases regulations during the period before the first benefit payment is made.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average annual cost of caring for a person in a mental handicap hospital.

Mr. Whitney: The average annual cost per in-patient in National Health Service mental handicap hospitals was £11,850 in 1984-85, the latest year for which this information is available.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many readmissions have taken place in hospitals for mentally handicapped people in each of the last six years; and for each year, if he will give a breakdown of readmissions according to the following age-bands: *(a)* under 16 years, *(b)* 16 to 19 years, *(c)* 20 to 24 years, *(d)* 25 to 30 years, *(e)* 30 to 40 years, *(f)* 40 to 50 years, *(g)* 50 to 60 years and *(h)* over 60 years.

Mr. Whitney: Information in the precise age groups requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The readily available information is given in the table.

Radmissions to mental handicap hospitals and units in England

Number

	Age group (years)								
	0-15	*16-19*	*20-24*	*25-34*	*35-44*	*45-54*	*55-64*	*65 and over*	*Total Total*
1979	6,962	2,429	2,084	2,092	786	633	433	314	15,733
1980	7,731	2,831	2,488	2,439	1,017	684	449	276	17,915
1981	8,567	3,454	3,001	3,058	1,323	763	424	264	20,854
1982	9,685	4,186	3,534	3,234	1,486	867	522	306	23,820
1983	11,421	5,341	4,595	4,316	1,855	1,205	539	457	29,729
1984	11,909	6,156	5,523	5,365	2,359	1,259	658	348	33,577

Birthweights (Flight Paths)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what studies have been made of the birthweight of babies born to mothers living close to flight paths near major airports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Whitney: We are not aware of any studies that have addressed this issue.

Seat Belts

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated annual saving to the National Health Service resulting from the compulsory wearing of seat belts in each year from 1983 to the latest available date.

Mr. Whitney: It is not yet clear whether the introduction of compulsory seat belts will actually reduce the costs to the National Health Service of treating road accident victims. There are undoubtedly savings where the wearing of seat belts has lessened injuries, but conversely NHS costs are increased where patients who would previously have died before reaching hospital survive to require—often prolonged—treatment. Some types of injury to the neck and thorax, which involve longer treatment, have become commoner.

In 1983, the first full year after the legislation took effect, the cost to the National Health Service of treating road accident victims was £108 million, £2 million higher than the previous year. 1984 figures are not yet available.

Traffic Casualties (Treatment Charges)

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the revenue accrued to the National Health Service under sections 154 to 156 of the Road Traffic Act 1972 in each year since 1982 to the latest available date.

Mr. Whitney: The payments in question are due under sections 154 and 155 of the Road Traffic Act 1972. The annual accounts of health authorities in England show total income from this source as:

	£'000
1982-83	5,894
1983-84	6,950
1984-85	7,324

Hip Replacement Operations

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hip replacement operations there were in Derbyshire and Amber Valley *(a)* in 1978 and *(b)* for the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend the information he seeks. It is not collected centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to write to the chairmen of the North and Southern Derbyshire district health authorities for the information requested.

Hon. Member's Question (Delay)

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his Answer of 13 March concerning the question of the hon. Member for Crawley of 18 February, if he will give the reasons for the delay in answering the honourable Member's question.

Mr. Fowler: I replied to my hon. Friend yesterday, but I regret any delay.

Circulars and Regulations

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the draft circulars and regulations on the single payments and weekly requirements schemes including No. RDL0486.

Mr. Newton: Copies of the papers on the proposals to amend the single payment regulations which have been sent to the Social Security Advisory Committee — including the draft regulations — were placed in the Library on 24 February 1986. On the same day a copy was also sent, for information, to all the Department's local offices under cover of a letter numbered RD/LO 4/86. It is not the Department's practice to publish such internal communications.

Following the Government's consideration of any comments the Social Security Advisory Committee may make on the proposals and the laying of amending regulations before Parliament, guidance on them will be issued to local adjudication officers in an S circular, a copy of which will be placed in the Library.

DHAs (Chairmanships)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which individuals or organisations outside his Department have been consulted or have had sight of the current nominees for district health authority chairmanships; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Health Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the manner in which health authorities have spent the money saved by means of submitting laundry, domestic and cleaning services to competition tender.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is not collected centrally.

NHS (Private Contractors)

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will publish the latest information he has about the number of *(a)* laundry, *(b)* domestic and *(c)* cleaning contracts submitted for competitive tender by health authorities, the proportion of each awarded in-house and to outside companies and the savings resulting therefrom;

(2) what were the cumulative savings at the end of 1985 made by health authorities as a result of submitting laundry, domestic and cleaning services to competitive tender.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

SCOTLAND

Grants

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all specific type grants paid by his Department to local authorities, showing the size of each grant, which were hypothecated to any individual services or where local authorities had to bid for specific grants.

Mr. Rifkind: The information based on 1985-86 estimated provision is as follows. All specific type grants to be paid in the current financial year are hypothecated to individual services. All grants require applications from local authorities.

Grant	*Purpose*	*1985-86 estimate provision £ million*
(i) Grants within Agregate Exchequer Grant:		
Urban Programme	To benefit deprived urban areas	19·400
Clean Air	To encourage and assist the reduction of emissions of smoke from domestic chimneys	0·150
Civil Defence	To encourage an even and consistent level of civil defence provision	1·800
Police	Reflects the Secretary of State's national responsibility for the maintenance of Law and Order	138·700
Housing Improvement and Repair	To improve houses which fall below tolerable standard, lack one or more standard amenities and/or are in need of repair	60·551
Additional Teachers in Urban Areas of Special Social Need	To allocate extra resources to the staffing of schools serving deprived urban areas and also schools in urban areas with a substantial proportion of ethnic minority children	3·600
Community Services Facilities	To establish community service schemes for offenders as an alternative to custodial sentence	1·400
Hostels for Adult Offenders	To provide, either directly or by passing grants on to voluntary organisations, hostel accommodation for offenders under supervision	0·200
Secondment for Training of Teachers in Special Schools	To assist with the costs of secondment for training of teachers in public and grant-aided special schools	0·400

Grant	Purpose	1985-86 estimate provision £ million
In-Service Training of Teachers in Certain Priority Areas	To promote the level of in-service training	0·300
Urban Development	The acquisition and clearing of land for the redevelopment of areas of war damage, bad layout, obsolete development, etc.	6·000
Town Redevelopment	To provide for the making of housing overspill agreements between 'exporting' and 'receiving' authorities to be carried out	1·275
Sewerage	To provide an incentive for rural schemes	1·600
Public Open Space	To assist in the acquisition of land for use as a public open space	0·034
List D Schools	To meet about 50 per cent. of the running costs of the two List D schools run by Strathclyde Regional Council	1·200
(ii) Other Grants paid by Central Government		
Historic Buildings	For repair and maintenance	0·142
Historic Buildings	For conservation	0·173
Water Supply in Rural Areas	For the provision, augmentation and improvement of services for domestic purposes	4·973
Water Supply for Industry	For the provision of services for new and expanding industrial development	0·425
Flood Prevention	For non-agricultural land	0·165
Countryside Grants	Final payment to Strathclyde Regional Council towards the acquisition of land for Strathclyde Park	0·693
Oil and Chemical Pollution	Towards the cost of clearing unattributable coastal pollution	0·012
Derelict Land	For reclaiming derelict land	0·323
Coast Protection	Grants to maritime local authorities as protective works proceeds	0·535
Rate Rebates for Revaluation Relief	For rebate of rates on certain properties, the rateable value of which increased more than three times at the 1985 revaluation	47·500
Rate Rebates for Disabled Persons	For rebates on rates charged for meeting special needs of a disabled person living at home and for relief of rates on qualifying institutional property	11·000
Rate Rebates in Enterprise Zones	In respect of rate income forgone from non-domestic properties in enterprise zones	2·700
Burrell Collection	A further payment to assist Glasgow District Council in meeting the costs of providing a building to house the collection	0·300
Home Insulation Scheme	For the insulation of roof spaces in houses	2·200
Housing Defects	To reinstate defective prefabricated reinforced concrete houses sold by public authorities and to buy back under certain circumstances	0·002
Environmental Improvement	To improve the general outlook and amenity of predominantly private residential areas	1·200
Slum Clearance	To encourage the clearance of slums with the prospect of rebuilding on the cleared site	3·100
Sites for Travelling People	To provide fully equipped official sites for travelling people	1·700
Housing Association Grant	For approved housing projects undertaken by Housing Associations registered with the Housing Corporation	9·200
Housing Support Grant	To meet the reasonable housing needs of local authority areas	64·178
Provision of Secure Accommodation	To allow provision of highly specialised facilities for use on an inter-authority basis	0·250

Grant	Purpose	1985-86 estimate provision £ million
Local Authorities' Careers Services	To meet the cost of additional posts and their support; and 50 per cent. contribution by central government towards cost of installing micro-computers in Careers Offices	1·692
Schemes in the Crofter Counties Programme	For local highway authorities responsible for roads in the former crofting counties	2·100
Edinburgh Outer City Bypass	A further payment in recognition of the importance of the bypass to the National Road Network	2·100
Township Road Programme	Towards the cost of constructing or improving roads serving crofting communities	0·350
Industrial Development	Towards the cost of constructing new roads essential to industrial development in assisted areas	0·300
Infrastructure	To assist and develop public transport in urban areas where road capacity is limited and a large number of passengers have to be carried on public transport services	7·370
Ports	Towards the cost, net of any European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) grant, of providing or improving terminal facilities for ferries in Highlands and Islands	3·265
Fishery Harbour Improvements	Towards maintenance and development of the fishing industry	0·476
Regional Development	Towards capital expenditure and on approved projects by local authorities and new town development corporations	1·650
(iii) European Community Payments		
Water and Sewerage Services	For water and sewerage services offset by receipts from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	4·256
Industrial Site Infrastructure	For industrial site infrastructure and factory sites and premises offset by receipts from the ERDF	6·001
Certain Steel Closure Areas	For the improvement of certain steel closure areas offset by receipts from the ERDF	0·501
Certain Shipbuilding Areas	For the improvement of certain shipbuilding areas offset by receipts from the ERDF	0·501
Tourism	For tourist infrastructure projects offset by receipts from the ERDF	0·085
Highway Authorities etc	For approved roadworks, offset by receipts from the ERDF	16·155
Piers, Harbours and Boatslips	For the cost of approved projects offset by receipts from ERDF	1·300
Further Education	For the construction costs of approved projects offset by receipts from the ERDF	0·226
Sport and Recreation	For construction of sports facilities offset by receipts from the ERDF	0·017
Social Work	For the construction of approved projects offset by receipts from the ERDF	0·007
Harbour Projects	Harbour construction and improvement offset by receipts from the ERDF	0·225

Parking Fines

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many persons in each region were charged in 1983 and 1984 as a consequence of failure to pay parking fines within the prescribed period;

(2) how many persons in Scotland in each region paid parking fines in 1983 and 1984.

Mr. John MacKay: Almost all parking offences are dealt with by the issue of fixed penalty notices under the relevant statutory provisions. Figures on penalties paid and cases referred for prosecution are available only for these fixed penalty notices as a whole, not specifically for the 80 per cent of the notices which are issued for parking offences. The available information, which is by police force area, is as follows:

Fixed Penalty Notices by Police Force Area

	Central	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Grampian	Lothian and Borders	Northern	Strathclyde	Tayside	Scotland
1983									
Notices Issued									
Parking Offences	2,560	1,167	7,161	29,981	110,636	6,519	149,286	13,547	320,857
Other Offences	960	1,933	1,975	1,283	11,076	—	49,040	3,568	69,835
Total	3,520	3,100	9,136	31,264	121,712	6,519	198,326	17,115	390,692
Outcome									
Penalty paid	2,726	2,434	7,952	25,929	75,139	3,737	78,599	13,271	209,787
No further police action taken	428	428	1,022	5,117	29,881	2,546	116,304	2,988	158,714
Case referred to procurator fiscal for prosecution	366	238	162	218	16,692	236	3,423	856	22,191
1984									
Notices Issued									
Parking Offences	3,177	1,645	6,120	25,966	112,046	6,120	136,502	13,776	305,352
Other Offences	1,185	2,599	2,111	4,568	11,631	—	37,841	4,247	64,182
Total	4,362	4,244	8,231	30,534	123,677	6,120	174,343	18,023	369,534
Outcome									
Penalty paid	3,442	3,386	7,029	24,019	73,746	3,417	103,019	13,600	231,658
No further police action taken	547	365	1,089	6,067	26,320	2,645	67,715	3,552	108,300
Case referred to procurator fiscal for prosecution	373	493	113	448	23,611	58	3,609	871	29,576

Tourism

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to seek to spread around Scotland the potential tourist benefit deriving from the 1986 Commonwealth Games; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The XIII Commonwealth Games will make a major contribution to Scotland's economy in 1986 and the Scottish Tourist Board estimates that almost £50 million will be directly injected into the economy. Spin-off benefits for the tourism industry are expected to last for a much longer period.

Some of the competitions associated with the Games will be held out with Edinburgh and many visitors will be accommodated outside Edinburgh during the Games, and these factors alone will help to spread the benefits. The Scottish Tourist Board, as the Government's main vehicle for the promotion of tourism in Scotland, is moreover prepared to support any operator intending to promote holiday packages designed to disperse Games' visitors throughout Scotland. The onus, however, is on individual operators and local area tourist boards to ensure that the attractions of their particular are a or facilities are suitably publicised in the Edinburgh area both in the run up to, and during, the Games. The attractions of Scotland, including the Games, to visitors already feature in the Scottish Tourist Board's domestic and overseas promotion literature.

Farms

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many farms run on a full-time basis there are in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: At the June 1985 agricultural census in Scotland 16,000 farms were estimated to be of full-time business size.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* for the latest year for which information is available, for each right hon. and hon. Member with constituencies in Scotland, the arithmetic mean in days that his Department took to reply to letters.

Mr. Rifkind: The information requested by the hon. Member could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. I would, however, refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr Younger) to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on Monday 15 July 1985 at column *37*.

Hypothermia

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his answers to the hon. Member for Dundee, East of 29 January, *Official Report*, columns *550-2* and 10 February, *Official Report*, columns *343-4*; he will give figures to show, for the years 1975 to 1980 inclusive, the numbers of deaths in each year with a mention of hypothermia on the death certificate; and if he will break down the figures by age group and by month of the year.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

Deaths with any mention of hypothermia, by age group and month, Scotland

	Under 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84	85+	Total
1975									
January	1	—	—	2	4	2	13	5	27
February	—	—	—	1	1	6	8	3	19
March	2	—	1	1	4	4	9	3	24
April	2	—	—	—	1	2	4	2	11
May	—	—	—	—	3	3	6	1	13
June	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	2
July	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	2
August	—	—	—	—	—	1	3	—	4
September	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	—	3
October	—	1	—	—	1	3	4	—	9
November	—	—	—	1	2	2	1	1	7
December	—	1	—	2	3	6	8	9	29
Total	5	2	1	8	20	31	59	24	150
1976									
January	1	—	1	1	7	5	4	—	19
February	—	1	—	3	5	9	14	9	41
March	2	—	1	1	1	11	17	4	37
April	—	—	—	1	1	2	6	2	12
May	1	—	—	—	1	3	4	2	11
June	—	—	—	—	1	2	1	2	6
July	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	1	3
August	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2
September	—	—	—	—	—	3	4	1	8
October	—	—	—	—	1	—	4	2	7
November	—	—	—	1	4	5	9	7	26
December	1	—	1	2	1	15	20	16	56
Total	6	1	3	9	23	56	83	47	228
1977									
January	1	1	1	1	5	7	18	5	39
February	—	—	—	1	—	7	12	3	23
March	1	—	—	—	1	2	9	4	17
April	—	—	—	—	2	2	4	2	10
May	—	—	—	—	1	3	1	3	8
June	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	2
July	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
August	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	—	3
September	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	3
October	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	1	4
November	—	—	2	—	1	5	7	5	20
December	—	1	—	3	1	5	15	3	28
Total	2	3	3	5	12	34	70	29	158
1978									
January	—	—	1	1	1	8	19	7	37
February	2	2	3	2	3	12	25	19	68
March	—	—	—	—	—	1	4	3	8
April	—	1	—	—	1	1	6	2	11
May	—	—	—	1	2	3	4	1	11
June	—	—	—	—	1	—	2	—	3
July	—	—	—	1	2	1	4	1	9
August	3	1	—	—	—	1	1	1	7
September	—	—	—	1	—	—	3	—	4
October	—	—	—	1	—	3	1	1	6
November	—	1	1	—	3	2	5	3	15
December	—	—	2	1	4	6	10	3	26
Total	5	5	7	8	17	38	84	41	205
1979									
January	—	—	3	4	8	24	29	18	86
February	1	—	—	3	5	7	21	6	43
March	—	—	—	1	1	10	12	6	30
April	—	1	—	3	—	3	3	1	11
May	—	—	—	—	—	3	3	1	7
June	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	2
July	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	—	3

	Under 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84	85+	Total
August	—	2	—	—	2	1	1	1	7
September	1	—	—	1	3	2	2	3	12
October	—	—	—	—	1	2	4	4	11
November	1	—	2	1	5	4	8	5	26
December	—	—	1	2	4	5	4	5	21
Total	3	3	7	15	29	63	89	50	259
1980									
January	1	—	—	1	6	11	21	4	44
February	—	—	2	1	1	5	6	5	20
March	2	1	2	—	2	5	13	5	30
April	—	—	—	—	—	2	10	2	14
May	1	—	—	1	—	2	2	—	6
June	1	—	—	—	1	3	2	—	7
July	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	2
August	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	—	3
September	1	—	—	—	—	1	2	—	4
October	1	—	—	—	3	3	2	2	11
November	1	1	—	1	—	2	8	4	17
December	—	—	—	2	5	10	18	6	41
Total	8	2	4	6	19	47	85	28	199

Forth Bridge

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide his latest estimate of the amount and proportion of the Forth bridge debt which arises from the inclusion of bridge approach roads in the debt.

Mr. Ancram: The approach roads originally cost £5·7 million, out of a total cost for bridge and roads of £19·7 million. After taking account of a proportionate share of the Government and local authority grants made available at the time, £4·2 million or 28·8 per cent. of the debt was attributable to the roads. The total outstanding debt has of course increased to around £21 million, but the proportion attributable to the roads remains the same.

Financial Services (Employment)

Mr. Fletcher asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were employed in the financial services sector in Scotland in 1979 and 1985; and if he will make a statement on employment prospects in this sector.

Mr. Rifkind: The number of employees in employment in Scotland in division 8 of the standard industrial classification—which covers banking, finance, insurance, business services and leasing—was 124,500 in September 1979 and 149,000 in September 1985. Up-to-date employment estimates for the financial services sector alone in Scotland are not readily available. Employment prospects in the sector as a whole are generally good with some further growth possible in the years ahead.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the budget of the Scottish Development Agency for 1986-87; and how this compares in real terms with *(a)* its original budget for 1985-86 and *(b)* its estimated outturn expenditure for 1985-86.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 March 1986, c. *372*]: The agency's gross provision for 1986-87, which comprises its gross grant-in-aid and its provision for industrial investment, is £136 million subject to parliamentary approval. This is equivalent to £130 million at 1985-86 prices and compares with *(a)* equivalent provision for 1985-86 of £128 million notified to the agency in August 1985 and *(b)* forecast outturn expenditure in 1985-86 of £132 million. The forecast additional expenditure in 1985-86 will be financed by additional receipts.

Private Woodlands (Grants)

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of expenditure on grants to private woodland owners in *(a)* 1985-86 and *(b)* 1986-87 under (i) the forestry grant scheme, (ii) dedication schemes and (iii) the broadleaved woodlands grant scheme.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 March 1986, c. *373*]: The Forestry Commission's best estimates, at this stage, of expenditure on grants to private woodland owners in 1985-86 and 1986-87 are as follows:

	**1985-86 (£ million)*	*1986-87 (£ million)*
Forestry Grant Scheme	4·70	4·25
Dedication Schemes	†1·62	‡1·55
Broadleaved Woodland Grant Scheme	0·03	1·00

Notes:

* The expenditure for 1985-86 includes arrears of grants (£0·1 million) from the previous year, arising from the retrospective increases in grant rates announced in July 1985.

† Includes £1·33 million for annual management grant payments.

‡ Includes £1·30 million for annual management grant payments.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Afghanistan

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made in the United Nations relating to the annexation by the Soviet Union of a strip of territory from Northern Afghanistan.

Mr. Eggar: We are not aware that the Soviet Union has annexed any part of Afghanistan, but we have certainly made our views clear about the Soviet occupation of that country. We have voted for all seven United Nations General Assembly resolutions calling for the withdrawal of foreign troops, the restoration of Afghanistan's independence and non-aligned character, the right of the Afghan people to self-determination and the return of refugees in safety and honour. We fully support the efforts of the United Nations Secretary General to find a peaceful settlement on this basis. The withdrawal of Soviet troops remains the key to peace.

Alliance of Soviet Solidarists

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's embassy in Moscow takes to monitor the activities of the Russian political organisation Alliance of Soviet Solidarists.

Mr. Eggar: The organisation referred to, commonly known as the NTS, is a Russian emigré body with its headquarters in Frankfurt. The organisation claims to have clandestine members and sympathisers in the Soviet Union. However, these have not normally come to official Western notice except when publicised by the Soviet authorities.

Montserrat

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the current per capita income of the lower income half of the population of Montserrat.

Mr. Eggar: The average per capita income of Montserrat is US$ 2,900. The current per capita income of the lower income half of the population is estimated at some 52 to 61 per cent. of the national average, that is within the range of US$ 1,500 to 1,800.

Turks and Caicos Islands

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government in relation to the sale of Crown land in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Mr. Eggar: The provisions relating to the sale of Crown land in the Turks and Caicos Islands are set out at section 56 of the Constitution (The Turks and Caicos Islands Constitution) Order 1976.

Our policy on the sale of Crown land was circulated to the Governors of dependent Territories in a dispatch dated 12 September 1969. It requires the Governments of grant-aided territories to consult the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as soon possible whenever property developers or other commercial organisations put propositions to them for the conclusion of agreement in order that the proposals may be scrutinised in London.

Cameroon

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made by him to the Government of the Cameroon about human rights in the Cameroon.

Mrs. Chalker: None.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* for the latest year for which information is available, for each right hon. and hon. Member, the arithmetic mean in days that his Department took to reply to letters.

Mr. Eggar: The precise information can be supplied only at disporportiate cost. However, it is our office practice to reply to all letters from right hon. and hon. Members within, as far as possible, two weeks from receipt. In the majority of cases these replies are substantive.

Islamic Holy Places

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Comonwealth Affairs what message Her Majesty's Government have received from King Hassan of Morocco about allegations against Israel's supervision of Islamic holy places in Jerusalem and other towns; and what response has been made to this message.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received from Her Majesty's ambassadors in Morocco and Israel about the announcement of King Hassan on 22 January that he was taking charge of the protection of the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem; and what message he has instructed to be conveyed to King Hassan about these proposals.

Mr. Eggar: We are aware of press reports that King Hassan had offered to send 150 Moroccan volunteers to Jerusalem to guard and protect the Al-Aqsa mosque. No message has been conveyed to King Hassan about this.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Additives

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider implementing recommendations 11, 13, 14, 15 and 16 of the report on water in food of the Food Standards Committee (1978).

Mrs. Fenner: The Meat Products and Spreadable Fish Products Regulations 1984, which come fully into effect on 1 July 1986, require that cooked and uncooked whole and cured meat should carry a declaration of maximum added water content, and corned beef an indication of its minimum corned beef content. These controls take into account the recommendations of the Food Standards Committee in its 1980 "Report on Meat Products", the Committee's earlier report on "Water in Food" and representations from interested parties.

The recommendations in the "Water in Food" report relating to fish products are among the issues currently being examined by the Food Advisory Committee in its review of coated fish products.

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the average amount per capita of coal tar dyes (Azo dyes) consumed by *(a)* the general public and *(b)* children of five, 10 and 15 years of age.

Mrs. Fenner: There are 10 colours presently permitted in food in the United Kingdom which contain the "azo" chemical grouping. The total intakes of these in the United Kingdom have been estimated as

(a) 20·9 mg per day for a typical 70 kg adult and
(b) 29·2 mg per day for a typical 25 kg child.

The estimates of the intakes of colours by children were based on assumptions about energy intake and no estimates were made for children of different ages.

Agricultural Development and Advisory Service

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the scale of the proposed cut in public funding for the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service for the financial year 1986-87.

Mrs. Fenner: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 6 February, at column 257, by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy).

Farms (Statistics)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farms run on a full-time basis there are in England.

Mrs. Fenner: About 98,000 according to the EC farm classification system. Such farms have crops and stock considered sufficient to generate margins to support at least one person.

Animals (Transit)

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to improve and expand both the quality and number of animal holding facilities at selected United Kingdom air and seaports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Holding facilities for animals subject to our rabies control arrangements are maintained at selected sea and airports by the port authorities, as recommended by the Waterhouse committee. Such facilities must conform with the Ministry's specifications and are regularly inspected.

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many prosecutions have taken place in each year since May 1979 under the United Kingdom Transit of Animals (General) Order 1973.

Mr. Gummer: Statistics collected by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department do not separately identify prosecutions under the Transit of Animals Order 1973 which applies to Great Britain. However, information available to my Ministry, which may be incomplete, indicates that the following numbers of prosecutions under the order were brought in the years in question:

Year	*number*
1979 (full year)	16
1980	42
1981	37
1982	50
1983	45
1984	11
1985 (Jan-Aug)	7

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* for the latest year for which information is available, for each right hon. and hon. Member, the arithmetic mean in days that his Department took to reply to letters.

Mr. Jopling: This information could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

Intervention Stores

Mr. Clay asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state the location of each intervention store within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jopling: As at 31 January 1986 the locations of intervention stores in the United Kingdom and the amounts stored were as follows:

Intervention Butter Stocks

Town	*Tonnes*
Aberdeen (2)	1,064
Annalong	680
Augher	1,001
Avonmouth (4)	2,388
Aylesford	239
Ballymena	243
Banbridge	5,086
Belfast (4)	3,926
Bellshill	3,149
Bloxwich	1,915
Bristol (4)	15,153
Buxton	1,225
Camborne	528
Cannock	2,450
Cardiff (3)	10,650
Chard	490
Chester	1,062
Coleraine	2,730
Colnbrook	4,808
Craigavon	331
Cullompton	13,708
Dagenham	1,896
Dalcross	72
Doncaster	2,756
Droitwich	626
Dundee	540
Eastleigh	758
Easton (2)	1,190
Edinburgh (3)	1,314
Exeter (2)	2,833
Fleetwood	2,604
Frome	1,459
Glasgow (2)	2,164
Gloucester	1,331
Goole	326
Grimsby (3)	6,587
Harlow	140
Heywood	725
Hull (5)	3,684
Kings Lynn (2)	2,509
Leeds (2)	2,024
Leek	1,295
Leith	1,195
Lisburn	1,583
Liverpool (5)	15,540
London (3)	4,376
Londonderry	998
Manchester (2)	6,199
Milford Haven	480
Milton Keynes	319
Newport	1,040
Northallerton (2)	2,308

Town	Tonnes
Nuneaton	1,411
Oswestry	3,089
Peterborough (2)	1,643
Pontefract	872
Portadown	3,614
Preston (2)	1,679
Reading	522
Retford	1,559
Rhyl	1,275
Roborough	1,149
Rochdale	748
St. Albans	16
St. Helens	1,144
Severnside	304
Sheffield (2)	2,869
Sherborne (2)	4,043
Shrewsbury	378
Southall (3)	1,572
Stourport	1,882
Stanmore	1,403
Strabane (2)	3,125
Swansea	3,222
Swindon	1,142
Taunton	448
Thetford	1,672
Trentham	409
Truro	2,939
Tyne and Wear (2)	1,731
Warrington	2,948
Warwick	1,545
White Abbey	1,097
Whitland	280
Wigan	838
Wigston	1,244
Wolverhampton	7,216
Yeovil	168

Intervention Cereal Stocks

Town	Tonnes
Abingdon	48,893
Airdrie	2,137
Alford	7,183
Alnwick	20,520
Ancaster	19,969
Arbroath	15,571
Attigavin	931
Avonmouth (4)	75,544
Aylesbury	17,229
Banbury (2)	51,069
Bardney	34,037
Barrow-on-Humber	10,093
Basildon	34,722
Belfast (2)	7,113
Belford	8,561
Bicester	36,467
Birkenhead	17,556
Birmingham	107,213
Blyth	9,458
Boroughbridge	5,483
Boston	12,536
Braintree (4)	23,823
Brentwood	3,179
Bressingham	48,953
Bridlington	34,002
Bury St. Edmunds (3)	71,401
Chipping Warden	28,406
Christchurch	37,902
Cleveland	13,546
Clopton	24,445
Colnbrook	31,566
Colsterworth	24,724
Corby	18,737
Coventry (2)	40,990
Dagenham	29,994
Didcot	17,543
Diss	11,972
Doncaster (2)	70,394
Downham Market	11,426
Driffield (3)	46,579
Droitwich	18,749
Drumlithie	13,805
Dudley	22,024
Duns (3)	104,538
Dysart	35,429
Earls Colne	7,069
Easingwold	6,855
Ely (5)	87,981
Elsworth	23,998
Evanton (2)	25,232
Exeter	4,536
Eye	7,454
Fakenham	12,035
Fearn	7,934
Felixstowe (3)	122,480
Finmere	37,052
Ford	6,217
Foulsham (2)	16,740
Fulbourn	9,869
Gainsborough	17,216
Gateshead	21,202
Glenrothes (2)	23,723
Gloucester (4)	139,335
Goxhill	2,648
Grantham (4)	80,400
Granton	23,302
Grateley	14,794
Grimsby+	15,594
Hadleigh	16,500
Hadstock	12,191
Halesworth (2)	72,735
Halstead	17,235
Haresfield	36,135
Harlebury (2)	112,048
Hayes	25,709
Heighington (2)	13,132
Hemswell	68,111
Heybridge	46,249
Honeybourne	44,261
Horncastle	22,555
Hoveringham	15,775
Hull (7)	135,764
Huntingdon (2)	31,001
Immingham	9,489
Ingham	12,082
Ipswich (2)	35,080
Keith (2)	17,102
Kings Lynn	98,923
Kirkcaldy (2)	11,218
Kirknewton	21,859
Kirton Lindsey	4,902
Laurencekirk	1,745
Leith	8,059
Leven	8,832
Lincoln (3)	134,714
Linton	4,898
Little Saxham	23,862
Locharbriggs	55,038
London	21,942
Londonderry	1,712
Long Eaton	28,833
Lerwick	10,754
Luton	50,232
Lutterworth (2)	94,537
Lympne	19,662
Maldon	102,879
Manby	49,094
Market Drayton	21,769
Market Harborough (2)	20,960
Market Rasen	10,547
Melmerby	25,912
Membury (2)	23,402
Methwold	9,842

Town	Tonnes
Minworth (2)	100,843
Misson	25,091
Mistley	11,998
Monmouth	19,524
Newbury	5,849
Newcastle	21,256
Newmacher (2)	12,077
Newmarket	63,369
Normanton	37,162
Norwich (3)	34,827
Ormiston (2)	83,258
Ownby (2)	17,287
Pebmarsh	8,341
Pencuick	13,990
Pickenhham	7,426
Pinhoe	4,536
Pocklington	12,312
Prees Heath	47,292
Purfleet	11,481
Quarrington	8,547
Rackheath	8,576
Raydon	9,641
Retford (2)	25,372
Ringwood (2)	89,632
Roydon	20,332
Royston	23,083
Salisbury (3)	97,068
Sawston	14,776
Scunthorpe (2)	138,372
Selby	32,408
Skegness (3)	45,801
Sleaford (2)	8,866
Sharpness	4,367
Snetterton	70,158
Soham	11,102
Southampton (2)	73,264
South Wigston	15,073
Spalding	7,684
St. Ives	15,704
Staughton	19,488
Stoke Ferry	15,057
Stowmarket (3)	50,711
Stracathro (3)	92,453
Stretham	20,214
Sudbury	11,169
Swaffham	5,036
Swinderby (2)	23,039
Swindon	110,981
Tadcaster	34,021
Tamworth	8,362
Tangmere	26,060
Telford (2)	20,041
Thetford (2)	44,250
Thorne	4,164
Towcaster	5,615
Tranent	12,506
Turriff	51,112
Tuxford (2)	23,223
Ulceby	10,298
Uttoxeter	67,282
Walsingham	16,132
Watford	59,885
Wednesbury	68,528
Wellingborough	10,445
Wells	359
Westbury (2)	17,328
West Bromwich	25,741
West Hallam	25,079
West Wratting	11,013
Whittlesey	10,474
Whittlesford	22,958
Wimblington (3)	78,022
Wingham	10,432
Wisbech	42,162
Witham	37,679
Witney (2)	47,603
Woodbridge (2)	18,609
Wroughton	35,167
Wymeswold	8,731
York (2)	45,814

Intervention beef stocks

Town	Tonnes
Aberdeen (3)	3,485
Antrim	5,344
Avonmouth (2)	748
Aylesford	40
Ballymena	1,089
Belfast (3)	5,555
Bellshill	345
Bishop Stortford	14
Bourne	210
Bridge of Allan	112
Bury St. Edmunds	549
Cambridge	177
Cannock	686
Cardiff	537
Coleraine	601
Colnbrook	1,714
Craigavon	3,071
Cullompton	196
Doncaster	122
Droitwich	819
Dundee	678
Dungannon	3,185
Eastleigh	239
Edinburgh (2)	326
Exeter	517
Felixstowe	142
Fleetwood	98
Fraserburgh	671
Gateshead	507
Gillingham	1,086
Glasgow (2)	1,237
Grantham	120
Granton	58
Hull (4)	6,867
Inverness	492
Kings Lynn (2)	4,064
Leeds (3)	2,934
Lisburn	1,928
Liverpool (4)	1,928
London (4)	2,744
Lowestoft	216
Luton	34
Manchester	1,190
Newry	183
Newtownabbey	5,088
Northallerton	147
Nottingham	118
Nuneaton	29
Omagh	1,580
Oswestry	243
Paddock Wood	1,491
Peterborough (2)	3,989
Peterhead	361
Plymouth	98
Pontefract	1,606
Portadown	39
Reading	42
Rhyl	198
Sherborne	141
Shrewsbury	776
St. Helens	206
Strabane	338
Trafford Park	516
Truro	95
Walsall	645
Warrington	389
Warwick	17
Wigston	14
Wolverhampton	741

Intervention SMP stocks

Town	*Tonnes*
Antrim	400
Avonmouth	201
Bellymena (2)	520
Banbridge	5,289
Bedwas	2,262
Billingham (2)	544
Bootle	120
Bristol	1,760
Coleraine	231
Calne	20
Craigavon	135
Cumbernauld	456
Cockermouth	1,135
Darlington	1,000
Droitwich	543
Exeter (2)	3,082
Glenrothes	966
High Ercall	1,694
Hillsborough	370
Katesbridge	420
Kingswinford	20
Kirby	80
Knockin Heath	349
Llandysul (2)	973
Lostwithiel	280
Honeymore	740
Newtownabbey	45
Newton Abbott (2)	531
Northallerton	375
Nuneaton	48
Penrith	920
Portadown	1,500
Redcar	136
Rotherwas	362
St. Clears	966
St. Helens	520
Stockton-on-Tees	1,673
Strabane	5,400
Taunton	240
Torrington (2)	880
Warrington	206
Wellington	1,520
Westbury	201
Whitchurch (Hants)	201
Whitchurch (Salop)	1,312

Dairy Produce (Export Subsidy)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, pursuant to the reply of 10 March, *Official Report*, column 357, he will publish in the *Official Report* the basic features of the proposal presented by the Commission to the Management Committee on 28 February.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 March 1986]: This proposal has been adopted as a Commission regulation and we expect it to be published shortly in the *Official Journal* of the European Communities.

Labour Statistics

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fishieries and Food if, pursuant to his reply of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *377*, he will state what percentage of farms in the United Kingdom employ *(a)* one to five hired workers, *(b)* five to 10 hired workers and *(c)* over 10 hired workers; and if he will state the equivalent figures for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and each of the standard regions in England.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 March 1986, c. *356*]: The information requested is presented in the tables:—

Table A—Distribution of agricultural holdings by number of hired workers: June 1984

Region	*Number of hired workers Labour size group*				
	0	*1-5*	*6-10*	*Over 10*	*Total*
North	7,533	3,981	178	70	11,762
	64·0 per cent.	33·8 per cent.	1·5 per cent.	0·6 per cent.	100 per cent.
Yorkshire and Humberside	10,204	5,734	541	245	16,724
	61·0 per cent.	34·3 per cent.	3·2 per cent.	1·5 per cent.	100 per cent.
East Midlands	10,265	5,970	689	365	17,289
	59·4 per cent.	34·5 per cent.	4·0 per cent.	2·1 per cent.	100 per cent.
East Anglia	7,151	4,610	840	603	13,204
	54·2 per cent.	34·9 per cent.	6·4 per cent.	4·6 per cent.	100 per cent.
South East	14,145	9,888	1,426	1,143	26,602
	53·2 per cent.	37·2 per cent.	5·4 per cent.	4·3 per cent.	100 per cent.
South West	22,293	12,121	771	326	35,511
	62·8 per cent.	34·1 per cent.	2·2 per cent.	0·9 per cent.	100 per cent.
West Midlands	12,153	6,366	523	324	19,366
	62·8 per cent.	32·9 per cent.	2·7 per cent.	1·7 per cent.	100 per cent.
North West	8,420	3,907	237	144	12,708
	66·3 per cent.	30·7 per cent.	1·9 per cent.	1·1 per cent.	100 per cent.
England	92,164	52,577	5,205	3,220	153,166
	60·2 per cent.	34·3 per cent.	3·4 per cent.	2·1 per cent.	100 per cent.
Wales	22,648	6,785	230	89	29,752
	76·1 per cent.	22·8 per cent.	0·8 per cent.	0·3 per cent.	100 per cent.

Region	Number of hired workers Labour size group 0	1-5	6-10	Over 10	Total
Scotland	21,306 68·4 per cent.	9,101 29·2 per cent.	574 1·8 per cent.	184 0·6 per cent.	31,165 100 per cent.
Great Britain	136,118 63·6 per cent.	68,463 32·0 per cent.	6,009 2·8 per cent.	3,493 1·6 per cent.	214,083 100 per cent.
Northern Ireland	41,754 94·8 per cent.	2,241 5·1 per cent.	36 0·1 per cent.	19 0·0 per cent.	44,050 100 per cent.
United Kingdom	177,872 68·9 per cent.	70,704 27·4 per cent.	6,045 2·3 per cent.	3,512 1·4 per cent.	258,133 100 per cent.

Notes:

Hired workers are defined as: regular whole-time hired workers, male and female; regular part-time hired workers, male and female; seasonal-casual workers, male and female; salaried managers.

Figures exclude 900 salaried managers in Scotland and 5,096 seasonal-casual workers in Northern Ireland.

Table B—Distribution of hired workers by labour size group of holding: June 1984

Region	Number of hired workers Labour size group 1-5	6-10	Over 10	Total
North	7,054 73·4 per cent.	1,281 13·3 per cent.	1,270 13·2 per cent.	9,605 100 per cent.
Yorkshire and Humberside	11,164 52·1 per cent.	4,015 18·7 per cent.	6,247 29·2 per cent.	21,426 100 per cent.
East Midlands	11,944 44·0 per cent.	5,123 18·9 per cent.	10,065 37·1 per cent.	27,132 100 per cent.
East Anglia	10,082 32·3 per cent.	6,283 20·1 per cent.	14,888 47·6 per cent.	31,253 100 per cent.
South East	21,021 33·7 per cent.	10,621 17·0 per cent.	30,766 49·3 per cent.	62,408 100 per cent.
South West	22,411 62·2 per cent.	5,576 15·5 per cent.	8,015 22·3 per cent.	36,002 100 per cent.
West Midlands	12,016 52·8 per cent.	3,891 17·1 per cent.	6,856 30·1 per cent.	22,763 100 per cent.
North West	7,333 59·2 per cent.	1,728 14·0 per cent.	3,320 26·8 per cent.	12,381 100 per cent.
England	103,025 46·2 per cent.	38,518 17·3 per cent.	81,427 36·5 per cent.	222,970 100 per cent.
Wales	11,305 75·7 per cent.	1,652 11·1 per cent.	1,981 13·3 per cent.	14,938 100 per cent.
Scotland	17,158 68·6 per cent.	4,136 16·5 per cent.	3,702 14·8 per cent.	24,996 100 per cent.
Great Britain	131,488 50·0 per cent.	44,306 16·9 per cent.	87,110 33·1 per cent.	262,904 100 per cent.
Northern Ireland	2,942 78·9 per cent.	261 7·0 per cent.	524 14·1 per cent.	3,727 100 per cent.
United Kingdom	134,430 50·4 per cent.	44,567 16·7 per cent.	87,634 32·9 per cent.	266,631 100 per cent.

Notes:

Hired workers are defined as: regular whole-time hired workers, male and female; regular part-time hired workers, male and female; seasonal-casual workers, male and female; salaried managers.

Figures exclude 900 salaried managers in Scotland and 5,096 seasonal-casual workers in Northern Ireland.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Lodiva Ltd.

Mr. William Powell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland whether he has yet received a report from the official liquidator investigating the affairs of Lodiva Ltd.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The official liquidator has made no formal report but the Crown Office fraud unit is in contact with him.

TRANSPORT

Railway Accidents

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria he uses in deciding whether or not to order a public inquiry into railway accidents.

Mr. David Mitchell: The criteria include the severity of the accident, in terms of loss of life or serious injury to passengers, railway staff, or others; where the accident forms part of a trend with potentially serious consequences; where the cause is unclear or there is doubt about the proper functioning of equipment or operational procedures; and where there is a need if appropriate to reassure the public about the safety of rail traffic and there is no reasonable alternative to a public inquiry available to achieve these purposes.

East Cleveland (Road System)

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will instigate an urgent inquiry into the management of the road system in east Cleveland, with particular reference to the provision of bypasses.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. The road system in east Cleveland is the responsibility of the local highway authority.

Sewage Works, Heathrow

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will indicate when he expects the report on the possibility of moving the Perry Oaks sewage works at Heathrow to be published.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that the consultants' study is likely to be completed in the late spring. Progress was slightly delayed by the severe winter weather. I expect the British Airports Authority and the Thames Water Authority to make the findings public in due course.

Airlines (Extended Range Operations)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements the Civil Aviation Authority has made for the implementation and enforcement of CAP 513, the criteria under which has extended range operations are to be assessed, for United Kingdom and foreign operators.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Civil aviation safety regulation is a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority. However, the authority has informed me that it has not received any application for extended range operations, but until the Air Navigation (General) Regulations are amended, it will regulate such operations by twin-engined aircraft through the machinery of the air operator's certificate. Operators of twin-engined aeroplanes whose certificates include geographical regions where extended range operations would be possible will have a condition inserted into the certificate prohibiting their operation of such aircraft over routes which include positions further than one hour flying time from a place where the aircraft can safely land. When the authority is satisfied that the criteria set out in CAP 513 can be met, the operator's certificate will be varied to permit extended range operations.

Pilot Fatigue

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if the Civil Aviation Authority has conducted any research in the area of pilot fatigue into the average time that flight crews have been awake on arrival in the United Kingdom following three-day transatlantic trips.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Civil aviation safety is a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority. However, the CAA has informed me that it is at present taking part in an international co-operative research programme on pilot fatigue and sleep, during the course of which problems related to sleep disturbance and deprivation during long east-to-west and west-to-east flights are being studied.

Interim reports are being produced at each stage of the project. The first, on sleep quality and planning strategies following eight-hour time zone change, was published by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration on 20 February 1986.

Helicopters (Offshore Diversions)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if the Civil Aviation Authority has completed the analysis of the total risk involved in the use of offshore diversions for helicopters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Civil aviation safety is a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority. The authority has informed me that it expects the study into the risks involved in the use of offshore diversions for helicopters to be completed in mid-April and a paper to be available in May.

Ship Registration

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department's review of the modernisation of ship registration arrangements was completed; what conclusions it reached; and what action he proposes to take.

Mr. Ridley: Two years ago my hon. Friend the Minister of State announced the Government's intention of modernising this area of law and he invited comments on proposals that were set out in a consultative document that was put to all the interested parties. The responses were most helpful and I have considered them carefully. This is a complex technical subject and some problems are still unresolved. But I envisage introducing appropriate amending legislation if and when parliamentary time can be found.

Departmental Land, Shrewsbury

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will arrange for the land owned by his Department on the A49 south of Bayston hill, Shrewsbury, to be cleared of gipsies and tidied.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no plans at present to clear this land of gipsies. The situation could be reconsidered if an authorised gipsy site is established in the area to which they can be moved.

Motor Cyclists (Hearing)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the noise effects of motor cycles on the rider's hearing.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This has been the subject of research which suggests that under certain conditions motor cyclists may risk damaging their hearing. I shall send my hon. Friend a copy of a recent paper published by the institution of Mechanical Engineers, which summarises the available information.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* for the latest year for which information is available, for each right hon. and hon. Member, the arithmetic mean in days that his Department took to reply to letters.

Mr. Ridley: This question could be answered only at disproportionate cost to my Department.

Chemicals (Conveyance)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if O,O-diethyl phosphorodithioate has been *(a)* approved as a dangerous substance that is permitted for conveyance by road; and *(b)* classified for the purpose of assigning a hazard warning sign on transporting vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are unable to find any references to this substance.

A range of similarly named pesticides are regarded as "toxic" for the purposes of supply and use under the Classification, Packaging and Labelling Regulations 1984 and packages must be marked with a number of appropriate risk and safety phrases. Such substances are also considered to be toxic for transport purposes and under the Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981 the appropriate hazard warning panels must be displayed on vehicles.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if 3-aminopropyldimethylamine has been *(a)* approved as a dangerous substance that is permitted for conveyance by road, and *(b)* classified for the purpose of assigning a hazard warning sign on transporting vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: 3-aminopropyldiethylamine is classified as "flammable and corrosive" for the purposes of supply and use under the Classification, Packaging and Labelling Regulations 1984 and packages must be marked with a number of appropriate risk and safety phrases. It is also considered to be corrosive for transport purposes and under the Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981 the appropriate hazard warning panels must be displayed on vehicles.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if gamma-BHc, (Lindane), has been *(a)* approved as a dangerous substance that is permitted for conveyance by road and *(b)* classified for the purpose of assigning a hazard warning sign on transporting vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This pesticide is classified as "toxic" for the purposes of supply and use under the Classification, Packaging and Labelling Regulations 1984 and packages must be marked with a number of appropriate risk and safety phrases. It is considered to be "harmful" for transport purposes and under the Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981 the appropriate hazard warning panel must be displayed on vehicles.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if aminomethyl-propanol has been *(a)* approved as a dangerous substance that is permitted for conveyance by road, and *(b)* classified for the purpose of assigning a hazard warning sign on transporting vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This substance is not regarded as dangerous in transport and vehicles carrying it in tanks are not required to display hazard warning panels.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) why benzylamine does not carry a substance identification number in column 5 of part 1A of the Health and Safety Commission's publication "Information Approved for the Classification, Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances"; and if he will make a statement;

(2) why benzylamine does not carry an agreed warning sign in column 6 of part 1A of the Health and Safety Commission's publication "Information Approved for the Classification, Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Classification for transport purposes in the authorised and approved list under the Classification, Packaging and Labelling Regulations 1984 is based on a United Nations list of substances recognised as being dangerous in transport. It is assumed that benzylamine is not transported internationally in significant quantities. In such cases, a consignor must classify a substance himself in accordance with the criteria in schedule 2 to the regulations.

M4 (Coach Crash)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Christchurch on 20 January, he will now make a further statement about the coach crash on the M4 near Reading on 15 January involving a double decker bus; whether the speed limiter device on the coach was working; what speed was registered; and what information was provided by the tachograph.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Both the speed limiter device and the tachograph fitted to this vehicle were working. As the police are now considering prosecution, detailed facts relating to the accident are sub judice.

European Road Safety Year

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department will be encouraging cycling and walking during Europe Road Safety Year; and what steps they will be taking to seek to make these modes of transport safer.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Fostering safer walking and cycling is an important part of the Department's approach to all roads and traffic matters. Initiatives includes programmes of research, advice on good practice and regular publicity campaigns, including during this European Road Safety Year.

Safe Routes to School Project

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will undertake an area-wide environmental and road safety improvement project, based on the concepts developed in the Safe Routes to School project.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall consider this interesting suggestion in the light of work being undertaken on related aspects of cycling and pedestrian safety.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Couchman asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the exclusive rights awarded to Channel Tunnel Group comply with European Economic Community competition policy.

Mr. David Mitchell: Both Governments have taken care to ensure that the concession agreement with the Channel Tunnel Group and France Manche is consistent with Community law. There have also been contacts with the Commission of the European Communities about the application of EEC competition rules to the Channel fixed link.

BR (Rolling Stock)

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Transport what response he has given to the request by British Rail for authority to order new rolling stock for use on the Waterloo-Southampton-Bournemouth railway line.

Mr. David Mitchell: I approved, on 28 January, British Rail's proposal to electrify the Bournemouth-Weymouth line and provide new rolling stock for Waterloo-Southampton-Bournemouth-Weymouth services. 121 new air-conditioned electric multiple unit vehicles are to be built, costing some £28·5 million. The first of these is due in service in 1987.

Public Service Vehicles

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report*, by operator group, the numbers of public service vehicles which *(a)* failed the annual test for each traffic area in Great Britain for each year from 1982-83 onwards and *(b)* failed the annual test for each traffic area in Great Britain after rectification of minor faults, for each year from 1982-83 onwards.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 March 1986, c. *364*]: The information requested is shown in the table.

The figures show that, except in a few instances, all operator groups in all areas have achieved a significant reduction in the percentage of vehicles that fail the annual test at the first attempt and in the percentage that fail after the rectification of minor faults.

Operator Groups	*Total Tests*	*Initial Fails*	*Pass after Rectification*	*Final Fail*
1982-83				
Northern Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	1,776	1,004	783	221
Passenger Transport Ex.	561	246	149	97
Local Authority	456	194	161	33
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	1,824	842	211	631
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
Yorkshire Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	1,471	775	569	206
Passenger Transport Ex.	2,172	1,305	919	386
Local Authority	398	202	177	25
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	2,384	1,211	417	794
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
North Western Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	1,662	778	688	90
Passenger Transport Ex.	3,727	2,853	1,824	1,029
Local Authority	723	203	112	91
Scottish Bus Group	1	1	—	1
Private	2,946	1,516	473	1,043
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
West Midland Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	904	427	334	93
Passenger Transport Ex.	2,371	1,136	472	664
Local Authority	51	12	12	—
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	2,542	1,241	400	841

Operator Groups	Total Tests	Initial Fails	Pass after Rectification	Final Fail
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
East Midland Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	1,518	706	542	164
Passenger Transport Ex.	4	1	—	1
Local Authority	904	343	313	30
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	2,689	1,132	405	727
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
Eastern Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	1,019	373	281	92
Passenger Transport Ex.	1	—	—	—
Local Authority	261	62	41	21
Scottish Bus Group	1	—	—	—
Private	2,334	1001	339	662
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
South Wales Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	922	509	243	266
Passenger Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
Local Authority	501	237	132	105
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	2,176	1,179	432	747
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
Western Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	1,684	761	462	299
Passenger Transport Ex.	3	2	2	—
Local Authority	247	120	50	70
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	3,270	1,619	607	1,012
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
South Eastern Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	2,526	1,032	365	667
Passenger Transport Ex.	28	20	10	10
Local Authority	711	225	121	104
Scottish Bus Group	1	—	—	—
Private	1,922	860	139	721
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
Metropolitan Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	1,337	724	366	358
Passenger Transport Ex.	1	1	—	1
Local Authority	3	2	1	1
Scottish Bus Group	2	1	—	1
Private	3,442	1,618	501	1,117
London Transport Ex.	4,958	2,957	2,152	805
Scottish Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	16	7	3	4
Passenger Transport Ex.	697	275	162	113
Local Authority	1,015	353	145	208
Scottish Bus Group	3,167	1,306	513	793
Private	2,879	1,233	200	1,033
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
1983-84				
Northern Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	1,673	761	656	105
Passenger Transport Ex.	469	272	226	46
Local Authority	389	163	136	27
Scottish Bus Group	1	1	1	—
Private	1,838	756	197	559
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
Yorkshire Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	1,445	742	553	189
Passenger Transport Ex.	2,103	1,051	736	315
Local Authority	384	193	183	10
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	2,426	1,152	372	780
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
North Western Traffic Area				

Operator Groups	Total Tests	Initial Fails	Pass after Rectification	Final Fail
National Bus Co.	1,597	421	336	85
Passenger Transport Ex.	3,618	2,094	1,206	888
Local Authority	708	119	57	62
Scottish Bus Group	1	—	—	—
Private	3,049	1,142	197	945
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
West Midland Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	913	380	274	106
Passenger Transport Ex.	2,139	1,021	592	429
Local Authority	44	13	8	5
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	2,558	1,144	375	769
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
East Midland Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	1,492	491	385	106
Passenger Transport Ex.	7	1	—	1
Local Authority	941	313	290	23
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	2,793	1,102	369	733
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
Eastern Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	1,042	398	330	68
Passenger Transport Ex.	1	—	—	—
Local Authority	224	56	40	16
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	2,521	1,055	426	629
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
South Wales Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	834	321	200	113
Passenger Transport Ex.	6	3	2	1
Local Authority	503	183	139	44
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	2,198	1,121	462	659
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
Western Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	1,630	763	508	255
Passenger Transport Ex.	2	—	—	—
Local Authority	264	129	88	41
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	3,266	1,612	659	953
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
South Eastern Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	2,324	760	327	433
Passenger Transport Ex.	2	2	1	1
Local Authority	704	212	126	86
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	1,853	764	118	646
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
Metropolitan Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	1,199	615	391	224
Passenger Transport Ex.	7	4	2	2
Local Authority	2	—	—	—
Scottish Bus Group	2	—	—	—
Private	3,272	1,556	521	1,035
London Transport Ex.	5,110	2,702	2,123	579
Scottish Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	21	11	4	7
Passenger Transport Ex.	771	165	105	60
Local Authority	987	302	133	169
Scottish Bus Group	3,045	1,011	345	666
Private	2,912	1,228	154	1,074
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
1984-85				
Northern Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	1,559	706	594	112
Passenger Transport Ex.	449	261	236	25
Local Authority	346	129	92	37

Operator Groups	Total Tests	Initial Fails	Pass after Rectification	Final Fail
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	1,487	632	180	452
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
Yorkshire Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	1,362	644	523	121
Passenger Transport Ex.	1,978	810	652	158
Local Authority	373	178	147	31
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	2,140	1,073	286	787
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
North Western Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	1,432	273	210	63
Passenger Transport Ex.	3,508	1,657	797	860
Local Authority	643	109	72	37
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	2,837	1,160	208	952
London Transport Ex	—	—	—	—
West Midland Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	928	347	276	71
Passenger Transport Ex.	2,097	797	538	259
Local Authority	42	14	13	1
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	2,532	1,088	371	717
London Transport Ex	—	—	—	—
East Midland Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	1,432	445	339	106
Passenger Transport Ex.	6	2	2	—
Local Authority	924	235	209	26
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	2,766	1,034	422	612
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
Eastern Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	886	356	287	69
Passenger Transport Ex.	5	5	5	—
Local Authority	243	86	62	24
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	2,228	1,009	421	588
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
South Wales Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	693	231	168	63
Passenger Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
Local Authority	462	175	141	34
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	1,859	948	444	504
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
Western Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	1,560	647	409	238
Passenger Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
Local Authority	225	75	51	24
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	2,974	1,197	467	730
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
South Eastern Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	2,207	595	320	275
Passenger Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
Local Authority	629	160	108	52
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	1,805	755	201	554
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
Metropolitan Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	1,261	506	315	191
Passenger Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—
Local Authority	4	2	2	—
Scottish Bus Group	—	—	—	—
Private	3,369	1,274	508	766
London Transport Ex.	4,630	1,496	1,250	246

Operator Groups	Total Tests	Initial Fails	Pass after Rectification	Final Fail
Scottish Traffic Area				
National Bus Co.	20	11	3	8
Passenger Transport Ex.	697	137	69	68
Local Authority	898	192	72	120
Scottish Bus Group	3,010	1,042	289	753
Private	2,776	1,148	137	1,011
London Transport Ex.	—	—	—	—

DEFENCE

Visual Display Units

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many visual display units are used by his Department and the armed forces; and how many of these visual display units are Tempest shielded.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Department does not maintain records of VDUs in a way which would permit a reply to be provided without disproportionate cost and effort.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

16. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Paymaster General how many men between the ages of 50 and 59 years have been unemployed for more than 12 months, two years and three years, respectively.

17. **Mr. Evans** asked the Paymaster General how many men over 50 years have been unemployed for over 12 months.

Mr. Lang: On 9 January 1986, the latest date for which figures are available, the numbers of unemployed men in the United Kingdom between the ages of 50 and 59 who had been unemployed for more than 12 months, two years and three years were 238,700, 172,400 and 122,600 respectively. The number of unemployed men over 50 years who have been unemployed for over 12 months in the United Kingdom was 256,700.

18. **Mr. Prescott** asked the Paymaster General what are the total numbers of employees in employment, with the estimated full-time equivalents for the years 1979, 1984 and 1985; and what estimated increases in full-time job equivalents ignoring increases in special employment measures, have taken place since the 1984 and 1985 Budgets.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There were an estimated 22·64 million employees in employment in June 1979, 20·70 million in June 1984, and 20·83 million in June 1985. Over the same period the number of people in self-employment grew from 1·9 million to over 2·5 million.

Insufficient detail is available to calculate reliable estimates of full-time equivalents which would, in any case, not reflect the importance of increasing labour market flexibility. The continuing growth of part-time jobs is part of a long-standing process of social change and has benefited both employers and employees.

19. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Paymaster General what is the latest estimate of the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women aged over 60 years who are currently in employment.

Mr. Lang: The labour force survey conducted in the spring of 1984 estimated that there were 1,015,000 men and 476,000 women, aged 60 and over, in paid employment in Great Britain.

21. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently in full-time employment in Great Britain.

Mr. Lang: The figure for employees in employment at September 1985 was 16,543,000, including part-time male employees, for whom figures are not separately available.

24. **Mr. Garrett** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment.

31. **Mr. Clelland** asked the Paymaster General how many people are unemployed now in the United Kingdom.

35. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Paymaster General how many people are unemployed in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

68. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Paymaster General if he will state the current level of unemployment.

72. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently unemployed.

Mr. Lang: On 6 February 1986 the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,381,893.

32. **Mr. Knox** asked the Paymaster General how many people were out of work in the Staffordshire, Moorlands parliamentary constituency at the most recent count.

Mr. Lang: On 6 February 1986 the number of unemployed claimants in the Staffordshire, Moorlands parliamentary constituency was 3,724.

33. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Paymaster General what is the latest figure of people who are unemployed; and how many people he estimates are unemployed though not listed as claimants.

Mr. Lang: On 6 February 1986 the number of unemployed people claiming benefits in Great Britain was 3,255,589.

According to the results of the labour force survey, in the spring of 1984 in Great Britain there were about 870,000 people without jobs seeking work who were not included in the monthly count of benefit claimants. There were also about 940,000 people claiming benefit who either had a paid job or were not looking for work.

37. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Paymaster General what has been the percentage increase in unemployment since March 1983.

Mr. Lang: Between March 1983 and February 1986, seasonally adjusted unemployment, excluding school leavers and adjusted for discontinuities, increased by 11·9 per cent. in the United Kingdom.

46. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Paymaster General what information he has on the percentage rate of unemployment in the European Economic Community as a whole at the most recent date for which figures are available; and what was the comparable percentage 10 years previously.

Mr. Lang: Using the latest figures available from national sources, the unemployment rate in the 12 European Community countries was 12·1 per cent. in December 1985. Comparable figures for 10 years ago are not available; but in December 1975, the rate in the nine EC countries, excluding Greece, Portugal and Spain, was 5·0 per cent. compared with 11·3 per cent. in December 1985.

54. **Mr. Parry** asked the Paymaster General if he will state the latest unemployment figures for Merseyside.

Mr. Lang: On 6 February 1986, the number of unemployed claimants in the Merseyside metropolitan county was 141,009.

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General how many people currently registered as unemployed are seeking their first job; what percentage this figure represents of the under 19 years age group; and how these figures compare with those for the same period in 1979.

Mr. Lang: The information is not available in the form requested. However, on 6 February 1986 there were 307,916 unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom who had never had a job since leaving school, of which 153,948 were aged under 19 years. Figures for the number of employees in the under 19 years of age group are not separately identified.

Direct comparisons of unemployment by age since 1979 are not possible because of changes in the way figures are collected. However, the number of unemployed registrants in the United Kingdom in February 1979 who have never had a job was 70,938. A breakdown of this figure by age group is possible only for Great Britain (figures not collected by age group for Northern Ireland) and this shows that out of a total number of 68,254 unemployed registrants in Great Britain who have never had a job, 44,352 were aged under 19 years.

Mr. John Fraser asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the numbers of persons unemployed for each of the wards of Rochester Medway city council.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. Figures are given showing the numbers of unemployed claimants in the wards of the Rochester-upon-Medway local authority district as at 6 February 1986.

	Number
All Saints	382
Caxton and Halling	182
Earl	469
Frindsbury	496
Frindsbury Extra	196
Holcombe	823
Hoo St. Werburgh	427
Horsted	255
Lordswood	518
Luton	785
Rede Court	135
St. Margarets and Borstal	386
Temple Farm	515
Thames Side	311
Town	924
Troy Town	532
Walderslade	643
Warren Wood	339
Wayfield	459
Weedswood	406

Mr. Alton asked the Paymaster General what recent representation he has received concerning the present level of youth unemployment.

Mr. Trippier: Since the beginning of February we have received three letters from hon. Members and four from members of the public on the subject.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will list his most recent figures for *(a)* the numbers of long-term unemployed, *(b)* the numbers unemployed for more than two years and *(c)* the number unemployed for more than three years in the northern region.

Mr. Lang: On 9 January 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, the number of claimants in the northern region who had been unemployed for over one year, over two years and over three years was 109,342, 70,092 and 47,156, respectively.

This information is in the Library.

Youth Opportunities Programme

20. **Mr. Sedgemore:** asked the Paymaster General what was the real value of the youth opportunities programme allowance in 1979 compared with the current YTS allowance.

Mr. Trippier: The youth opportunities programme allowance in 1979 was £20·55 per week, equivalent to about £35 at today's prices. The current YTS allowance is £27·30 and the allowance for second-year trainees will be £35 from 1 April this year. Allowance levels must reflect the fact that trainees are only learning, and YTS provides substantially upgraded training compared with the youth opportunities programme.

Youth Unemployment

22. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the current level of youth unemployment on Merseyside.

Mr. Trippier: On 9 January 1986, the latest date for which figures are available, the number of unemployed persons aged under 25 years in the Merseyside metropolitan county was 54,875.

Community Programme

23. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the current operation of the community programme.

Mr. Lang: The community programme continues to operate successfully and currently provides 192,000 long-term unemployed people with the opportunity of worthwhile employment on projects of benefit to the community.

56. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Paymaster General how the value of the average allowance paid on the community programme compares with the allowances paid since 1979 under the special temporary employment programme and the community enterprise programme.

Mr. Lang: Under all three programmes participants have been paid the locally agreed hourly rate for the job, not an allowance. For each programme there has been a limit on the extent to which sponsors of projects are reimbursed the wages costs of participants. Under the community programme the limit is £63 per week per participant (excluding managers and supervisors whose wages costs are fully reimbursed). The limit under the special temporary employment programme was £71 per week per participant in 1979, rising to £83 from July 1980. The limit for the community enterprise programme was originally £83 per week per participant, rising to £89 in June 1982.

The current limit for the community programme is not directly comparable with those for the other programmes because of the large number of part time workers on the community programme.

74. **Mr. Terry Davis** asked the Paymaster General how many people obtained jobs under the community programme in 1985 or for the most recent 12-month period for which statistics are available; and how many of these people had been unemployed for more than three years.

Mr. Lang: During the 12 months period ending on 31 January 1986 (the latest date for which statistics are available) 220,399 people obtained employment on community programme projects.

Information on the number of these people who have been unemployed for more than three years is not readily available, and could only be obtained at a disporportionate cost.

Mr. Favell asked the Paymaster General if he will review the present system of eligibility for the community programme.

Mr. Lang: The operation of community programme eligibility is kept under continuous review, including the eligibility criteria for priority entry.

Industrial Relations

25. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the operation of industrial relations legislation passed since 1979.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Our industrial relations legislation has given members a greater say in the affairs of their own union, provided a fairer balance of power between unions and employers and contributed to the general improvement in industrial relations in British industry.

Long-term Unemployed (Counselling Services)

26. **Mr. Watts** asked the Paymaster General how many long-term unemployed have succeeded in finding work as a result of the counselling services provided in the pilot areas.

Mr. Lang: By 7 March, 629 people had left the unemployment register since being interviewed. Four hundred and thirty seven of these were placed in jobs or community programme vacancies as a direct result of submissions made during the counselling interviews.

Long-term Unemployed Persons

27. **Mr. Rowe** asked the Paymaster General what percentage of those long-term unemployed so far approached under the Manpower Services Commission's jobcentre initative have responded positively to the approach; what percentage have accepted an offer from the list of openings available through the Manpower Services Commission by item; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Over 73 per cent. of those so far approached have responded positively by attending for interview. Of those:

19 per cent. of those interviewed have been submitted to a job;
21 per cent. to a community programme place;
1 per cent. to a voluntary project programme opportunity;
5 per cent. for entry into a job club;
14 per cent. to an opportunity for further training;
14 per cent. to a place upon a restart course;
4 per cent. to an information session about starting their own business under the enterprise allowance scheme;
9 per cent. have been referred to other agencies or to specialist Manpower Services Commission services;
12 per cent. declined an offer and
8 per cent. were not made an offer.

These percentages exceed 100 because some people were offered more than one type of opportunity.

29. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Paymaster General what was the real value of the allowance paid to long-term unemployed workers on the special temporary employment programme in 1979 compared with the current average wage on the community programme.

Mr. Lang: Under both the special temporary employment programme and the community programme workers have been paid the locally agreed hourly rate for the job, not an allowance. For both programmes there have been limits on the extent to which sponsors of projects are reimbursed the wage costs of participants. Under the special temporary employment programme, this limit was £71 per week per participant in 1979. Adjusting this figure according to the retail prices index would raise it to £122·80 at January 1986 prices. The limit for the community programme is £63 per week per participant, excluding managers and supervisors whose wages are reimbursed in full. However, the figures are not directly comparable because of the large numbers of part-time workers on community programme projects.

Wages

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General what has been the movement in wage levels for the top 20 per cent. of employees since 1979; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Between April 1979 and April 1985 the level of gross average weekly earnings exceeded by the top 20 per cent. of full-time adult employees increased by 97 per cent. for men and by 108 per cent. for women.

Tourism

30. **Mr. Maclean** asked the Paymaster General what is the proportion of *(a)* employees in employment and *(b)* self-employed persons directly and indirectly engaged in the tourist industry.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) on 29 October 1985, at columns 425-26, for the latest comprehensive estimate on employment supported directly or indirectly by tourists' spending.

The most recent available information on employees and the self-employed in the industries most closely related to tourism is given in table 8.1 of "Labour Market Data" in *Employment Gazette* for February 1986, a copy of which is in the Library.

Supplementary Benefit

34. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Paymaster General if he will make it his policy to refuse supplementary benefits to those who reject an offer of training under the YTS; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The small number of young people who unreasonably refuse a suitable place on YTS risk having their supplementary benefit reduced in the same way as those who unreasonably refuse a suitable offer of employment. Each case is judged individually on its merits by the independent adjudicating authorities. I am sure that this is the right approach, and there are no plans to change the current rules.

Wages Bill (Job Creation)

36. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Paymaster General what is the Government's best estimate of the number of jobs likely to be created for young people as a result of the Wages Bill.

Mr. Trippier: There is clear evidence in studies both in the United Kingdom and internationally of the link between pay and jobs, especially for the young. There are several studies on the employment effects of the wages council system, all of which contain evidence that the councils inhibit employment. I am not aware of any studies which estimate the number of jobs which will arise from the specific reforms which we have proposed and attempts to quantify the job gains are not likely to be fruitful. However, the removal of statutory minima which prevent employers offering jobs at rates which young people would accept must result in increased employment.

Local Enterprise Agencies

38. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Paymaster General how many secondments there currently are with local enterprise agencies.

Mr. Trippier: There are currently 166 secondees with local enterprise agencies in England.

47. **Mr. Richard Page** asked the Paymaster General what action he will take to seek to encourage more secondments from large firms to local enterprise agencies.

Mr. Trippier: Business in the Community is taking the lead in encouraging an increase in secondments to local enterprise agencies from large firms. Such secondments can qualify for tax relief. The Government fully support BIC's efforts in this area.

50. **Mr. Burt** asked the Paymaster General how many local enterprise agencies there were as at the end of February.

Mr. Trippier: At the end of February there were 320 enterprise agencies in the United Kingdom, of which 233 meet the requirements of the Finance Act 1982, which allows private sector sponsors tax relief on their contributions to such bodies.

Confederation of British Industry

39. **Mr. Amess** asked the Paymaster General when he last met the Confederation of British Industry; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I met the Director General of the Confederation of British Industry on 12 March. We discussed the Government's inner cities initiative and a number of other matters.

Trade Union Ballots

40. **Mr. Hargreaves** asked the Paymaster General how many unions have received public funds for trade union ballots.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am informed by the certification officer that 29 trade unions have received public money under the provisions of section 1 of the Employment Act 1980.

Business (Marketing Skill)

41. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Paymaster General what steps he proposes to seek to improve the levels of marketing skill prevalent amongst those starting up in business.

Mr. Trippier: Advice on marketing is available to those starting-up in business as part of the general business advice offered by the Department's small firms service. The Department of Trade and Industry provides help with marketing and market research to small businesses in areas affected by closures in the steel, shipbuilding and textile industries through its business improvement services package. The British Overseas Trade Board provides a range of assistance which can help the small exporter with marketing overseas. Consideration is being given to the possibility of extending the business and technical advisory services financed by the Department of Trade and Industry to cover marketing.

New Businesses

42. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo** asked the Paymaster General what is the latest figure for firms setting up in business in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: Using the number of new registrations for VAT it is estimated that there were 176,729 new business starts in the United Kingdom in 1984. The estimates were published in an article in *British Business* 23 August 1985, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Small Firms (Payments)

43. **Mr. Harris** asked the Paymaster General what recent representations he has received about the problems that small firms have with late payment of bills.

Mr. Trippier: We continue to receive representations on this issue from small firms and small firms organisations. These representations confirm the adverse effect of delays on the financial position of small businesses. We shall publish guidance shortly on good practice in payment of bills.

Jobcentres and Benefit Offices

44. **Mr. Ottaway** asked the Paymaster General what steps are being taken to encourage links between jobcentres and unemployment benefit offices.

Mr. Ian Lang: Most jobcentres already have close links with unemployment benefit offices and liaison arrangements are kept under review.

In order to increase the awareness of jobcentre services amongst claimants, including longer term unemployed. Thirty-four pilot projects in unemployment benefit offices are currently under way and a further 33 are planned. The projects include vacancy displays, some with jobcentre staff in attendance, information displays and the installation of electronic equipment which gives information on jobcentre services.

Youth Training Scheme

45. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on progress to date towards implementation of the two-year YTS.

Mr. Trippier: Progress towards setting up two-year YTS has been excellent. With the new programme due to begin in April, already some 86 per cent. of required places are definitely or likely to be provided. We aim to provide high quality training for young people of all abilities and circumstances and are well on the way to achieving this.

63. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Paymaster General what recent representations he has received about the extended YTS scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: We have received many representations on the shape and content of YTS. The new two-year programme has been widely welcomed. It is designed to meet the needs of industry and of young people, and will be a major advance for training in Britain.

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General what is the latest estimate of the percentage of young people who can expect to go straight into full-time employment after completing a YTS; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission conducts a monthly follow-up survey of all young people leaving YTS. The latest results, covering young people who left between 1 April and 30 September 1985, show that 59 per cent. went straight into full-time work on completion of their YTS training. The survey also shows that 66 per cent. were in full-time work some three months after completing their training, with a further 4 per cent. in part time work and 3 per cent. in full-time education/ training.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Carttiss asked the Paymaster General what steps he is taking to provide business training and counselling for people joining the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Trippier: People on the enterprise allowance scheme can take advantage of both public and private sector training and counselling. Including the provision made available through the Manpower Services Commission's training for enterprise programme.

We have recently agreed that from 1 April that programme should be expanded and, in respect of start up provision, it will offer 44,500 places in 1986-87.

In addition. I understand that the commission, itself will shortly consider proposals for a revised approach to training, advice and counselling for those who wish to take advantage of the enterprise allowance scheme.

51. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Paymaster General what is the latest success rate of those starting up in business under the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Trippier: The latest available survey evidence shows that of those taking advantage of the full year's allowance, 61 per cent. were still trading three years after starting up in business. For every 100 of these continuing businesses at the three-year point 99 additional new jobs had been created, of which 50 were full time and 49 were part time.

59. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Paymaster General how many entrants there have been to the enterprise allowance scheme in England between 1 August 1983 and the latest available date.

Mr. Trippier: 103,476 people entered the enterprise allowance scheme in England between 1 August 1983 and the end of January 1986.

71. **Mr. Maples** asked the Paymaster General how many additional jobs have been generated by businesses set up under the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Trippier: The latest survey evidence indicates that of every 100 businesses still trading two years after the allowance has stopped, 99 additional jobs have been created. No statistics are available which show the total number of additional jobs generated by the enterprise allowance scheme.

Self-employed Persons

49. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Paymaster General what is the latest estimate of the number of self-employed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lang: In September 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, the number of self-employed people in the United Kingdom was provisionally estimated to be 2,651,000.

YTS Weekly Allowance

52. **Mr. Ashton** asked the Paymaster General what are the latest figures for the YTS weekly allowance as a percentage of the average weekly wage of 16 and 17-year-olds in full-time employment.

Mr. Trippier: In April 1985, the YTS allowance was 39 per cent. of the average gross weekly earnings and 48 per cent. of the take-home pay of 16 and 17-year-olds in full-time employment.

Franchising Opportunities

53. **Mr. Terlezki** asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to the role played by franchising opportunities for those wishing to set up in business.

Mr. Trippier: We are aware of the growth in Franchising over recent years and of projections for future growth in this area. It is clear that franchising can make an important contribution to the creation of new businesses, wealth and jobs. We are maintaining contact with the British Franchise Association.

Further Education

55. **Mrs Virginia Bottomley** asked the Paymaster General what measures have been taken to improve the quality of work-related non-advanced further education.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) on 21 January 1986 at column 126.

Small Business Sector (Tourism)

57. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Paymaster General what is his estimate of the wealth and job creation potential of the small business sector over the next 12 months in the tourism sector.

Mr. Trippier: The Department does not produce forecasts of wealth and job creation linked to tourism spending. Many factors are involved. But if tourism spending continues to grow (the estimated increase between 1984 and 1985 was £1·2 billion at current prices or 10 per cent.) There will be scope for many thousands of new jobs in tourism-related sectors over the coming years. Job creation of the order of 50,000 jobs a year is feasible according to estimates from the BTA/ETB. Since the tourism sector has a high proportion of small businesses much of the growth could be expected to benefit the small business sector.

Pre-strike Ballots

58. **Mrs. Roe** asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to how many pre-strike ballots have taken place since the implementation of the Trade Union Act 1984.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Our Department is aware of about 160 pre-strike ballots believed to comply with the provisions of the Trade Union Act 1984 but there will have been other ballots which we do not know about.

Manufacturing Industry (Employment Trends)

60. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Paymaster General what are the employment trends in manufacturing industry.

Mr. Lang: In the last two years the number of employees employed in manufacturing has reduced at an average rate of 13,000 a quarter, a much slower reduction than in previous years.

69. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Paymaster General when he will next seek to meet the Trades Union Congress to discuss employment prospects in the manufacturing industry.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am always prepared to discuss matters of mutual interest with the Trades Union Congress, but I have no plans for a meeting on this specific subject in the near future.

Our policies have created the climate which has led to strong growth in manufacturing output, investment and exports. The decline in manufacturing employment, which has been experienced by all major industrialised nations, has eased considerably in this country since 1983.

Air Pollution

61. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to increase resources available to the Health and Safety Executive for the investigation of air pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Decisions on the allocation of resources to particular areas of work are a matter for the executive, subject to the limits set by the Government on its total salary expenditure and manpower. The executive plans to increase the number of industrial air pollution inspectors in the field, up to five new inspectors are expected to take up post shortly.

Youth Training Policies (Educational Advice)

62. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Paymaster General from where he obtains educational advice in formulating his youth training policies.

Mr. Trippier: We are in close touch with the Secretary of State for Education and Science and his Department. In addition, we receive recommendations from the Manpower Services Commission, which runs YTS. The commission itself includes a representative of education interests, and a number of its advisory committees include education service representatives.

Beveridge Report (Work Test)

64. **Mr. Ralph Howell** asked the Paymaster General what plans he has for implementing a work test as recommended in the Beveridge report.

Mr. Lang: The measures proposed in the 1942 Beveridge report would require considerable resources and I am not convinced they would be either cost-effective or practicable. We are currently reviewing the availability test for unemployed claimants so as to ensure that abuse is properly identified and dealt with.

Skilled and Professionally Qualified People

65. **Sir Dudley Smith** asked the Paymaster General what new initiatives he proposes to help the skilled and professionally qualified unemployed to obtain work.

Mr. Lang: There is a wide variety of existing help available for skilled and professionally qualified unemployed people from the Manpower Services Commission employment division, including the professional and executive recruitment service, and from the training division. Access to all this help is provided by jobcentres.

In addition, jobcentres are operating a pilot programme of counselling interviews for long-term unemployed people in nine locations throughout the country.

Small Firms (Venture Capital Investment)

66. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Paymaster General what is the trend in venture capital investment in small firms.

Mr. Trippier: There has been significant growth in venture capital investment in the United Kingdom during the last six years. The United Kingdom venture capital journal has reported aggregate investments in the United Kingdom by United Kingdom-based venture capital organisations of £110 million in 1982, £166 million in 1983 and £228 million in 1984. Comparable figures for 1985 are not yet available, but independent venture capital funds are reported to have raised total funds of £273 million against £193 million in 1984.

In 1984 approximately a quarter of total investment supported start ups or other early stage financings. In addition, direct investment by individuals under the business expansion scheme is providing significant amounts of equity finance for small firms.

Manufacturing Industry (Employment Prospects)

67. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Paymaster General when he will next meet the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the prospects for employment in manufacturing industries.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: All the Ministers in my Department meet officials and members of the Confederation of British Industry frequently to discuss various aspects of employment, economic and industrial policy. I have no plans for a meeting on this specific subject in the near future.

Job Creation Schemes

70. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on his policy for job creation schemes for people over 50 years of age; and what is the present number of such people now on such schemes.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to part 3.7 of volume 11 of the White Paper "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1986-87 to 1988-89" (Cmnd. 9702) which sets out the policy of the Department's employment measures. Statistics on the number of people over 50 benefiting from the employment measures could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Youth Wages

73. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Paymaster General what was the level of youth wages in the United Kingdom as a percentage of adult wages *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* the latest figures available.

Mr. Lang: The latest available information is as follows:

Gross weekly earnings of full-time young employees as a percentage of those of full-time adult employees

GB

	*Boys**	*Girls†*
April 1979	39·7	58·1
April 1985	35·6	51·6

Source: New Earnings Survey.

* Full-time males aged under 18 as a percentage of full-time males aged 21 and over.

† Full-time females aged under 18 as a percentage of full-time females aged 18 and over.

Wage Levels

75. **Mr. Cunliffe** asked the Paymaster General what has been the change in wage levels for the top 20 per cent. of workers since 1979 compared with the bottom 20 per cent.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Between April 1979 and April 1985 the level of gross weekly earnings exceeded by the top 20 per cent. of full-time adult employees increased by 97 per cent. for men and by 108 per cent. for women. Over the same period the level below which the earnings of the bottom 20 per cent. of full-time adults lay increased by 79 per cent. for men and by 86 per cent. for women.

Wage Statistics

Mr. Yeo asked the Paymaster General what is his estimate of the number of full-time workers who have a gross wage of less than £140 per week.

Mr. Lang: About 6·3 million full-time adult employees in April 1985.

Fire Brigades (Rights of Entry)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to introduce legislation to increase the rights of entry of local fire brigades into premises controlled by the Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: No.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* for the latest year for which information is available, for each right hon. and hon. Member, the arithmetic mean in days that his Department took to reply to letters.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. However, a sample survey taken for all replies dispatched in the month of March shows that the average time taken to reply was 14 working days from the date of receipt of the letter. If the hon. Member is concerned about a delay on a particular case, I would be very willing to look into the matter.

Disabled People

Mr. Ashley asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the analysis of statistics collected to monitor the promotion of the code of good practice on the employment of disabled people.

Mr. Lang: Statistical and other information monitoring the promotion of the code of good practice on the employment of disabled people is collected by the Manpower Services Commission's disablement advisory service. Quarterly returns show that the disablement advisory service teams are promoting the code to employers in their areas by a variety of means, including presentations to individuals and groups of employers, mailshot exercises, and local press and broadcast

coverage. In many parts of the country, considerable help is given by local committees for the employment of disabled people. So far, well over 60,000 copies of the code have been distributed to employers and others. Promotion of the code will continue to be a priority task for the disablement advisory service.

Mr. Ashley asked the Paymaster General what results he has so far received from the monitoring of employers' reactions to the code of good practice on the employment of disabled people.

Mr. Lang: Indications so far are that employers welcome the code, like its style, and find it easy to use. Employers are using it both as a reference document and as a programme for action. When the code was launched in November 1984, it was recognised that employers had to be given time to turn the code's guidance into actual practice in the workplace. An in-depth evaluation of the extent to which employers are making use of the code will begin later this year.

Mr. Ashley asked the Paymaster General when he expects the Manpower Services Commission to report on the further research it is carrying out on ways in which disabled people might be encouraged to register as disabled; and who is represented on the working party established to do this.

Mr. Lang: I expect to receive by the end of April the Manpower Services Commission's proposal for research into questions related to the quota scheme. Subject to looking at the details of these proposals I expect results to be available in the second half of 1987. The National Advisory Council on the employment of disabled people and also members of the commission's working group which proposed the research will be consulted about its design and its results.

Mr. Ashley asked the Paymaster General what is the latest information available on how many employers are subject to the disabled persons quota; of these, what percentages meet the quota; what percentages were issued with permits within the last 12 months and what percentages were issued with bulk permits; and what percentages were below their quota but had not been issued with permits.

Mr. Lang: On 1 June 1985, the latest date for which information is available, 35,481 employers were subject to the provisions of the quota of which 28·1 per cent. employed the full quota of registered disabled people. A further 52·7 per cent. of this total were below quota but had been issued with permits during the previous 12 months, 52·1 per cent. with bulk permits. The remaining 19·2 per cent. of employers were below quota and had not been issued with permits. However, these were not necessarily breaking the law unless they had engaged other than registered disabled people in the period.

Mr. Ashley asked the Paymaster General which organisations applied for funding under the scheme announced in April 1985 established to encourage voluntary organisations to assist disabled people in finding and retaining employment; and which received funding and for how much.

Mr. Lang: Twenty three voluntary organisations have applied for funding under the pilot employment initiatives for disabled people scheme. Of these, three applications to date have been approved in principle by the Manpower Services Commission, and others are under consideration. No contracts have yet been finalised. Applications are treated as confidential until contracts are agreed.

Noise Levels

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Paymaster General what information he has available on the exposure risks for high-noise levels generated from the industrial and commercial use of motor mowers, chain saws, circular saws and other power tools.

Mr. Trippier: Noise levels produced by power tools at the operator position vary considerably, depending on the individual machine, method of use and position of the operator. For the specific machines mentioned, levels generally exceed 90 dB(A). Risk of hearing damage depends on the adequacy of any ear protection used and the length of exposure.

Co-operatives

Mr. Thurnham asked the Paymaster General what he intends to do to seek to encourage the growth of co-operatives.

Mr. Trippier: Co-operatives can benefit from a number of schemes introduced by the Government to help and encourage small businesses. In addition, the Co-operative Development Agency, which is sponsored by our Department, seeks to stimulate the growth of co-operatives by providing help and advice to co-operatives and to people wishing to set up such enterprises. The number of co-operatives has increased from less than 500 in 1982 to over 1,200 in 1985.

Job Losses

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General what is his latest figure for the number of jobs that have been lost in *(a)* manufacturing, *(b)* shipbuilding, *(c)* engineering, *(d)* textiles and *(e)* construction in (i) the north, (ii) the north-west, (iii) Scotland, (iv) Wales and (v) Great Britain since 1979.

Mr. Lang: Information about job gains and job losses is not available from the Department's statistics, but an indication of the net changes can be seen by comparing levels of employment at different dates.

The following table gives, for the industries and areas specified, the net changes in employment between September 1979 and September 1985 (the latest date for which figures are available). Separate estimates are available for the shipbuilding and engineering industries only at national level. At regional level they are included in the metal goods, engineering and vehicles industries (division 3 of the 1980 standard industrial classification). Regional estimates for the textiles (including man-made fibres) industry are not available.

Employees in employment: Changes between September 1979 and September 1985

Thousand

	North	*North West*	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Great Britain*
Manufacturing industries	−124	−291	−168	−109	−1,730
Shipbuilding and repairing	..	..	..	..	−52
Metal goods, engineering and vehicles	−62	−102	−73	−40	−782
Mechanical engineering	..	..	..	..	−246
Electrical and electronic engineering	..	..	..	..	−103
Instrument engineering	..	..	..	..	−14
Textiles (including man-made fibres)	..	..	..	..	−137
Construction	−39	−39	−44	−18	−291

.. Not available.

Ethnic Minorities (Entrepreneurial Skills)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General what steps he is taking to promote a growth in entrepreneurial skills amongst the ethnic minority population in the inner cities.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 March 1986]: Our Department, through the Manpower Services Commission, is already involved in enterprise training for the ethnic minority population in the inner cities. The commission is currently planning over 100 courses for the disadvantaged in 1986, each of which will probably cater for the needs of 12 to 16 trainees, and these courses will include many members of the ethnic minority population. At my request the commission is now consideration other proposals.

The Government are in the process of setting up eight inner city task forces to help tackle all the unemployment problems faced by residents in these areas. We and the task forces will aim to promote entrepreneurial skills among residents, including members of ethnic minority groups.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 19 March 1986

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Shops Bill [*Lords*]

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, if the Church Commissioners will make it their policy to dispose of their shareholdings in all companies which have indicated an intention to take advantage of the provisons contained in the Shops Bill/*Lords*]; and if he will make a statement.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The Church Commissioners cannot anticipate what action they might wish to take following enactment of legislation that is still under consideration by Parliament. The hon. Member will be aware of the strength of feeling expressed by the General Synod and church people in respect of the provisons of this Bill.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Criminal Trials (Corroborated Evidence)

Mr. Best asked the Attorney-General whether he has received any representations concerning the use of the uncorroboated evidence of accomplices in criminal trials in Northern Ireland; whether the practice of the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland in this respect is the same as that of the Director of Public Prosecutions for England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I have received or seen a number of expressions of view on this matter. Many of them have clearly been founded on the quite erroneous belief that there is a difference, as regards the use of accomplice evidence, between the law and practice in Northern Ireland and the law and practice in England and Wales. Since that belief may be held more widely, it is desirable that I should take this opportunity to state publicly and categorically that it is indeed erroneous, to explain once more what the law and practice is on both sides of the Irish Sea, and to put this whole matter in the correct perspective.

As I explained in the answer which I gave on 24 October 1983 to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer)—and I shall repeat the exact words which I used then—the law in England and Wales and Northern Ireland is the same. In both jurisdictions, where an accomplice gives evidence for the prosecution, it is the duty of the judge to warn the jury that, although they may convict on his evidence, it is dangerous to do so unless it is corroborated. This is an old rule, well-recognised and rigidly applied, and it now has the force of a rule of law. A precisely similar rule applies where a judge is trying a case without a jury. The judge must warn himself that, although he may convict on the evidence of an accomplice, it is dangerous to do so unless it is corroborated. subject to these rules, the uncorroborated testimony of an accomplice is admissible in law and the tribunal of fact has the right to convict upon it.

The practice of the prosecuting authorities in deciding whether to mount a prosecution based on the evidence of an accomplice is also the same in Northern Ireland as it is in England and Wales. The practice of the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland is as follows.

When the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary has evidence of terrorist offences it is his duty to put that evidence, and the full facts surrounding it, before the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland. This is the position irrespective of whether the evidence is that of an accomplice who is willing to testify against his co-participants or whether it is evidence of any other nature.

The director must then consider whether, on the evidence, there is a reasonable prospect of a conviction. That is to say, he must decide whether in relation to an identifiable person there is credible evidence of an offence which the prosecution can adduce before a court and upon which an impartial tribunal of fact, properly directed in accordance with the law, may reasonably be expected to find the offence proved beyond reasonable doubt.

Where the testimony of an accomplice is presented to him, the Director will, in order to decide whether it is a sufficiently credible basis upon which to institute proceedings, look for corroboration. A definition of corroboration in law was given by Lord Reading C.J. in R v Baskerville (1916) 2KB 658 in the following terms: "evidence of corroboration must be independent testimony which affects the accused by connecting or tending to connect him with the crime. In other words, it must be evidence which implicates him, that is which confirms in some material particular not only the evidence that the crime has been committed but also that the defendant committed it."

However, the term "corroboration" is often used in a looser sense to mean other supporting evidence which, though not amounting to corroboration in law, may support the testimony of the accomplice in that, while it does not implicate a particular accused, it does tend to show that the accomplice is a truthful witness.

Both in England and Wales and in Northern Ireland the decision of the Director whether or not to proceed in reliance on the evidence of an accomplice is approached on exactly the same basis. Neither Director regards himself as bound by a rigid rule or practice on the matter: his decision depends on the circumstances of the particular case. In respect of corroboration in its strict legal sense, there is no general practice whereby corroboration is regarded as essential. On the other hand, the absence of such corroboration might be a decisive factor against proceedings in a particular case. If there is no corroboration in the strict sense, however, the availability of other cogent supporting evidence becomes an important factor. In a case where there is no corroboration at all, either in the strict sense or in the looser sense of supporting evidence, it is very unlikely that a prosecution will be instituted.

It is sometimes suggested that, whatever may be the formal position as to the caution which a court must exercise in approaching the evidence of an accomplice, the fact that terrorist offences in Northern Ireland are tried by a judge sitting without a jury renders it impossible for that caution to be properly exercised, with the result that the standard of justice which is in fact applied in such cases falls short of the standard which would be applied in

comparable cases in England and Wales. Nothing could be further from the truth. The care with which the Northern Ireland judges approach the evidence of accomplices has been demonstrated in numerous cases and was illustrated vividly by the judgment which the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Lowry, gave on 26 October 1983 in the case of R *v* Gibney and others. That judgment explained and exemplified the scrupulous care taken by the courts to ensure that nobody is convicted except on proof beyond reasonable doubt. I referred to that judgment in the answer which I gave in this House on 14 November 1983 to the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) and, as I then said I would do, I arranged for a transcript of it to be placed in the Library of the House. I recommend that all those who may be tempted to criticise the attitude of the Northern Ireland judges should read it to see for themselves the care with which accomplice evidence is examined and assessed.

A further illustration of this may be found in the statistics of acquittals in cases involving accomplice evidence. In respect of trials on indictment for scheduled offences where evidence was given by an accomplice the position for the years 1983 to 1985 is as follows:

	1983	*1984*	*1985*
Number of trials	4	4	3
Number of persons convicted or pleading guilty	55	26	41
Number of persons acquitted	13	46	41

In addition, the convictions of 14 of the persons tried in 1983 were quashed on appeal to the Court of Appeal in 1984. It should also be remembered that, if a person is convicted on indictment of a scheduled offence, he has an automatic right, by virtue of section 7(6) of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978, to appeal against conviction and sentence to the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal. Thus each case can, in effect, be heard twice and be considered by four judges.

The impression is also sometimes given, and sometimes believed by some persons, that the trial of persons accused of terrorist offences on the basis of the uncorroborated evidence of accomplices is a routine and frequent occurrence in the courts of Northern Ireland. As I have explained, the use of such evidence is perfectly legitimate and it is indeed the duty of the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland to have recourse to it whenever he considers that, in accordance with the criteria which I have described, it is in the public interest that a prosecution should be instituted and pursued on that basis. I make it clear that he has my full authority and support for his practice in this respect. But the number of cases in which such evidence has actually been relied on represents a very small proportion of the total number of cases involving scheduled offences which have come before the Diplock courts. The relevant statistics for the last three years are as follows:

	1983	*1984*	*1985*
Number of persons tried on indictment for scheduled offences	627	514	725
Total number of persons pleading guilty or convicted in such trials	569	439	574
Total number of persons tried in such trials where evidence was given by an accomplice	68	72	82
Total number of persons pleading guilty or convicted in such trials where evidence was given by an accomplice	55	26	41

As I have earlier noted, 14 of the 55 persons who were convicted in 1983 in trials where evidence had been given by accomplices had their convictions quashed on appeal in 1984.

Public Order Act 1936

Mr. Soley asked the Attorney-General how many people have been referred to him for prosecution for offences under section 5A of the Public Order Act 1936; and how many have been prosecuted since 1979.

The Attorney-General: The number of persons reported to me for this offence cannot be accurately ascertained except at disproportionate cost. However, I am writing today to the hon. Member about this matter. Fifty-nine people have appeared before the courts between 1 January 1979 and 19 March 1986 for an offence under section 5A Public Order Act 1936 or conspiracy to commit an offence under section 5A. There are at present prosecutions outstanding in respect of five persons.

WALES

Local Government Expenditure

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list those local authorities in Wales whose latest estimate of 1985-86 expenditure levels are below those on which grant-related poundage levels were based; and what representations he has received on this matter;

(2) whether he estimates that any Welsh district councils will end the 1985-86 financial year outside the expenditure target he set;

(3) whether the settlement working group at its meeting on Monday 10 March considered those district councils whose rate support grant for 1986-87 was based on the likelihood that they would overspend in 1985-86; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Three district and two county councils budgeted to spend over their expenditure target in 1985-86. Only one authority, Ynys Môn, has so far indicated to the Welsh Office that it expects its expenditure for the year to be within target. Revised expenditure estimates will be submitted to the department shortly, but the actual level of spending incurred by any council will not be known until accounts for the year have been finalised.

In relation to 1986-87, the expenditure base for grant-related poundages has been determined on the basis of councils' own budgets for 1985-86 as set out in the first supplementary report for that year. My hon. Friend has written to my right hon. Friend about the position in Ynys Môn and, as was explained to him, this decision was endorsed by the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance and we do not propose to change it.

The expenditure base for 1987-88 has yet to be determined. It was the subject of discussion at the

settlement working group meeting on 10 March and will be considered further in conjunction with other aspects of the 1987-88 settlement.

Wool (Guarantee Price)

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to increase the guarantee price for wool this year to Welsh sheep producers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The wool guarantee price level for 1986 is currently being considered. Interested parties are being consulted and an announcement will be made in due course.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Mergers

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to seek to reduce the length of time taken by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in considering mergers referred to it.

Mr. Howard: The six-month period specified in the legislation is described as a maximum, although it can be extended by one period of three months. Collecting and evaluating the evidence is a complex process and it is important that the commission has sufficient time to do justice to all the aspects of a case. But I am prepared to consider whether there are circumstances in which the commission might be asked to report in a shorter period.

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, when evaluating the competitive position of proposed mergers, what criteria he uses to evaluate the international context and, in particular, the competitive position of United Kingdom companies in overseas markets; and if he will define the international context referred to in his answer of 3 March to the hon. Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) *Official Report*, columns 40-41.

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, further to the answer to the hon. Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) on 3 March, *Official Report*, column 41, how he defines the international context in applying merger and competition policy criteria to the examination of take over bids involving companies whose markets are largely overseas.

Mr. Howard: The market share test in the merger control legislation is expressed in terms of the supply of goods or services within the United Kingdom. However, our mergers policy recognises that in some cases it is necessary to have regard to the international context. This can take a variety of forms, depending on the circumstances of particular cases. Imports may be a competitive factor within the United Kingdom market: or a reduction of competition in the United Kingdom market may have to be weighed against advantages in terms of a merged company's competitive position in international markets.

British Publishers (Piracy)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last made representations to the authorities in Taiwan about the piracy there of the works of British publishers; what further steps he proposes to take; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: It is not possible for the Government to make representations direct to the authorities in Taiwan, which the United Kingdom does not recognise. Taiwan has, however, recently introduced a new copyright law which will protect foreign works if they are registered in Taiwan, provided that the country of which the authors of those works are nationals gives reciprocal copyright protection. To ensure eligibility of works of United Kingdom authors for registration in Taiwan the United Kingdom made an Order in Council on 18 November 1985 providing the necessary protection in the United Kingdom for works originating in Taiwan. No further action is contemplated unless there is evidence that the new Taiwan law is failing to protect United Kingdom works against copyright piracy.

Board of Trade

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what anniversary of the Board of Trade is currently being celebrated by his Department; and in what manner.

Mr. Butcher: The year 1986 is the 200th anniversary of the Order in Council under which the Committee of Privy Council for Board of Trade was created in its present form. To commemorate the occasion the Department is being honoured by a visit from Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh. In addition, the celebrations include a service of commemoration which took place on 28 February, a meeting of the Board of Trade, a programme of lectures related to the work of the Department, and the publication of the history of the Board of Trade, copies of which will be placed in the Library.

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when was the most recent meeting of the Board of Trade; who attended; what was the purpose of the meeting; and what business was transacted.

Mr. Butcher: The last meeting of the Board of Trade, when the President, the right hon. Henry Labouchere and the Parliamentary Secretary, the right hon. Earl Granville were present, was in 1851. There was no formal agenda; day to day business of the Board of Trade was discussed.

English Industrial Estates Corporation

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the normal date for publication of English Estates' annual report and accounts; and why the report and accounts for 1984-85 have not yet been published.

Mr. Channon [*pursuant to the reply*, 14 March 1986, c. *601*]: English Estates would normally publish its accounts by the August following the end of the relevant financial year. However, last year, before its accounts were ready for publication, the Comptroller and Auditor General qualified the accounts of the Welsh and Scottish Development Agencies as regards the treatment of property valuations in them. The Public Accounts Committee has been considering this issue and I understand that its report is due soon.

As the same issue arises in the case of English Estates 1984-85 accounts, its publication has been delayed. They

will be published as soon as the discussions now under way about the most appropriate treatment in them of property valuations are satisfactorily concluded.

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on the funding of the English Industrial Estates Corporation.

Mr. Channon: The 1985 Industrial Development Act introduced a more commercial system of funding the EIEC with effect from 1 April 1986, and I have now agreed the arrangements for the 1986-87 financial year under this new system. In the future, English Estates will use the income from rents and the sale of assets such as factories and land to fund its development programmes and my Department will contribute a fixed amount of grant-in-aid each year.

The chairman of English Estates has confirmed that under these new arrangements he is confident that English Estates will be able to spend at least £32 million on new development in the assisted areas next year and continue the redevelopment of Chatham dockyard without affecting the programme in the assisted areas.

Consistent with the 20 per cent. increase in the provision for EIEC announced by my right hon. and learned Friend last November, my Department will contribute £12·6 million grant-in-aid towards this development programme and the balance will be raised by English Estates itself from rents and sales.

These new arrangements should allow English Estates to continue its development programme in the assisted areas without any cutback from the average level of recent years.

Enriched Uranium

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his reply of Friday 7 March, to what uses the enriched uranium will be put when returned to the United Kingdom from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics under the economic and industrial co-operation programme.

Mr. Goodlad: I have been asked to reply.

On return, the enriched uranium will be fabricated into fuel elements for use in the UK generating boards' power stations.

Land Rover

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the implications of a possible sale of Land Rover to General Motors for the prospects for an order worth approximately £50 million from the Australian Government for Land Rover vehicles.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

PRIME MINISTER

Guinness-Distillers Merger

Mr. Sims asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on co-ordination between the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in the Government's consideration of the proposed revised Guinness-Distillers merger.

The Prime Minister: The decision on the revised proposals for a Guinness-Distillers merger will be taken by my hon. Friend the Minister for Information Technology, who will have regard to the advice of the Director General of Fair Trading, and the views of other interested Government Departments, including the Scottish Office and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

South Korea (Book Piracy)

Mr. Adley asked the Prime Minister if, prior to her proposed meeting with Mr. Chun Doo Hwan of South Korea, she will raise with the Government of that country the question of piracy in South Korea of books published by British publishers; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom raised the issue of improved protection in Korea for its intellectual property at the Anglo-Korean bilateral economic policy consultations in Seoul last month. We were informed that the Koreans were preparing legislation on copyright to go to the National Assembly this year and that it was their intention to accede to one of the international copyright conventions in 1987. We shall continue to monitor the situation and the matter will be raised in the course of President Chun Doo Hwan's visit.

Mr. Olof Palme

Mr. Rooker asked the Prime Minister if she has paid an official visit to the Swedish embassy to sign the book of remembrance for Olof Palme.

The Prime Minister: Yes, on 3 March.

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister why she did not herself attend the funeral of the Swedish Prime Minister; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I would have wished to attend Mr. Palme's funeral had it not conflicted with a very long-standing engagement in this country. Instead, my right hon. and noble Friend, the Lord President of the Council attended the funeral as the representative of the British Government.

I shall be reading the lesson at a memorial service for Mr. Palme later this week.

ENERGY

Sellafield

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what was the isotope and chemical form of the isotope responsible for the exposure of the individual worker at Sellafield who received in February one year's permissible radiation dose;

(2) what was the measurement of activity on the personal air sampler of the worker at Sellafield who received in February one year's permissible radiation dose; and what was the sampling rate of the instrument at that time;

(3) what was the critical organ exposed in the body of the worker at Sellafield in February who received his annual permissible exposure; and what was the estimate of the dose to this organ in milliseiverts;

(4) what will be the lifetime cumulative dose to the lungs of the worker, in millisieverts, at Sellafield in February, who received one year's permissible dose of radiation;

(5) what is the assessment of the whole body dose, effective dose equivalent, in millisieverts received by the worker at Sellafield in February who received one year's permissible dose of radiation.

Mr. Goodlad: I have asked the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels plc to write to the hon. Member with the detailed information that he has requested.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Immigration

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply to the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) on 11 February, *Official Report*, columns 394-95, what representations he has received on the draft guidelines concerning representations made by right hon. and hon. Members in immigration cases; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. and learned Friend and I have had meetings with, and have received written comments from, a number of right hon. and hon. Members from both sides of the House.

We remain convinced that the working of the present system creates serious strains which could destroy it if numbers continue to increase rapidly, and that it is therefore in the interests of all concerned to find means of improvement.

The main points which emerged from these consultations concerned the proposals about contacts with the ports, the need to provide for right hon. and hon. Members to act for a constituency Member when he or she is not available, the references in the draft guidelines to temporary admission and detention, and the need to emphasise that persons who marry while on temporary admission should be required to return to their own counry to obtain entry clearance.

In the light of the points raised I am today placing in the Library revised draft guidelines. The principal change reflects the wish of a number of right hon. and hon. Members that they should still be able to ring my private office and that of my hon. and learned Friend to ask for the removal of a passenger to be deferred while representations are made and considered. Although I believe that many of the objections raised to the proposal for contacting the ports were misconceived, I am ready to see if the present arrangements can effectively be sustained for the future.

An opportunity will be provided for the House to debate the revised proposals before new guidelines become effective.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many dependants of United Kingdom citizens were accepted for admission in the 12-month period from May 1980 to April 1981.

Mr. Waddington: The available information relates to the numbers subject to immigration control who were accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom. In the year ending March 1981, a total of 40,800 wives, children and other dependant relatives were accepted for settlement.

Draize Eye Test

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to find an alternative to the Draize eye irritancy test; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I understand that a number of alternatives to the Draize eye test are currently being investigated, though there is not yet a proven non-sentiment alternative to this test. We shall shortly be issuing guidelines to researchers with the aim of ensuring that the test is used only where absolutely necessary and that any painful effects are reduced to a minimum.

Prisoners (Transfer)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what notice is given to *(a)* a prisoner and *(b)* a prisoner's relatives before a prisoner is moved or transferred.

Mr. Mellor: Where possible and where security considerations permit, a prisoner is given sufficient notice of a transfer to enable him to inform relatives by post. Where for any reason a prisoner has not had the opportunity to do this and he has a visiting order outstanding, he may ask on arrival at his new establishment for his prospective visitors to be immediately informed of his transfer by telephone at public expense. Where a visiting order is not outstanding, he is not allowed to have a telephone call made, but may be provided with a letter at public expense instead.

Prison Property (London)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present number of properties which are owned by his Department and let to prison officers working at each of the London prisons.

Mr. Mellor: The numbers of occupied quarters are as follows:

	No.
Brixton	335
Holloway	159
Pentonville	221
Wandsworth	232
Wormwood Scrubs	320

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison properties at each of the London prisons have been sold in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: The information is as follows:

	Number of housing units sold				
	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Brixton	—	—	30	—	1
Holloway	—	—	—	—	—
Pentonville	—	—	—	7	1
Wandsworth	—	—	1	—	8
Wormwood Scrubs	—	—	—	—	—

Probation Officers

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he plans to restore the cuts in funding for training probation officers working in prisons effected in 1985.

Mr. Mellor: Funds will be available from 1 April 1986 for the training of probation officers working in prisons.

Citizenship

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for *(a)* registration with entitlement, *(b)* naturalisation and *(c)* registration of minors his Department received between (i) April 1983 and March 1984, (ii) April 1984 and March 1985 and (iii) April 1985 and the nearest available date.

Mr. Waddington: The numbers of applications received by type of application are:

Citizenship applications received

	Registration of adults	*Naturalisation*	*Registration of minors*
April 1983—March 1984	21,661	13,618	9,173
April 1984—March 1985	19,824	15,640	8,205
April 1985—February 1986	19,214	14,970	8,637

Notes:
(1) Registration figures include entitlement and non-entitlement registrations.
(2) The figures for 1985-86 are provisional and subject to verification at a year-end stock-take.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff are currently in post in B4 division of his Department; how many of them work wholly on the processing of citizenship applications; *(a)* November 1985, *(b)* March 1985, *(c)* November 1984 and *(d)* June 1984, or the nearest available dates.

Mr. Waddington: The available information is:

Nationality Division Staff

Month	*Staff in post*	*Staff working wholly on processing applications*
March 1986	218·5	170·5
November 1985	220	169
March 1985	246	195
November 1984	263	215
June 1984	263·5	217

Notes:
(1) Part-time staff are reckoned at half a full-time post.
(2) The 1984 figures for staff working wholly on processing applications are estimates.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* applications and *(b)* grants of British citizenship have been made in each month since April 1985 for (i) naturalisation, (ii) registration with entitlement and (iii) registration of minors.

Mr. Waddington: The information available is as follows:

Applications Received and Granted

Month	*Registration of Adults*		*Naturalisation*		*Registration of Minors*	
	Received	*Granted*	*Received*	*Granted*	*Received*	*Granted*
1985						
April	1,818	1,669	1,432	1,221	838	847
May	1,592	1,308	1,350	970	857	663
June	1,468	1,691	1,107	1,139	684	644
July	1,888	2,431	1,423	1,304	846	1,076
August	1,735	2,055	1,398	1,081	767	855
September	1,633	2,148	1,202	1,149	698	846
October	2,041	2,967	1,521	1,346	836	1,132
November	2,119	3,447	1,613	1,801	890	1,351
December	1,536	1,420	1,432	840	688	682
1986						
January	1,694	1,865	1,340	1,168	858	787
February	1,690	2,131	1,152	1,573	675	956

Note:
(1) Registration figures include entitlement and non-entitlement registrations.
(2) The figures for applications received are provisional and subject to verification at a year-end stock-take.

Prisons (Suicides)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* suicides and *(b)* attempted suicides have taken place in Her Majesty's prisons during each of the last seven years.

Mr. Waddington: The number of prisoners adjudged by inquests as having committed suicide in prison custody and the number of prisoners recorded as having injured themselves with apparent suicidal attempt in England and Wales was as follows:

Year	Suicide	Non-fatal self injury with apparent suicidal intent
1979	21	250
1980	21	271
1981	16	214
1982	18	243
1983	†21	212
1984	†23	390
1985	‡21	*

* Not yet available.

† Including in each year one prisoner who died in an outside hospital as a result of a suicide attempt before his reception into prison custody.

‡ Inquest verdicts on 16 prisoners who died in custody during 1985 are still awaitedd; some of these are likely to be verdicts of suicide.

Magistrates Courts (Waiting Times)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the national information collection system described in circular HOC 67/1984 LCDTC (84)I can now indicate waiting times for cases to be heard in magistrates courts; and when he expects delays, broken down by types of offence, to be published.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to her question on 17 February, at column 46.

Soviet Sailors

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what constraints are imposed by his Department on the ability of Soviet sailors to travel freely in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) on 20 January, at columns 7-8.

Vietnamese Refugees

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn of 7 March, *Official Report*, column *30*, if he will relax the criteria for admission to the United Kingdom of relatives of Vietnamese refugees settled here.

Mr. Waddington: In its response to the Home Affairs Committee's report on refugees the Government accepted the Committee's recommendation that the family reunion criteria should be relaxed in respect of a number of Vietnamese in camps in countries of temporary asylum. The Committee did not recommend, nor do the Government think it justified to propose, any more general relaxation of the normal criteria.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what evidence he decided to change the criteria for the admission to the United Kingdom of relatives of Vietnamese refugees settled here.

Mr. Waddington: It was decided to revert to the criteria applied to the relatives of all other refugees, with effect from May 1981 in the light of, among other factors, the United Kingdom's participation in the orderly departure programme from Vietnam, our wide-ranging commitments to refugees of many other nationalities, and to the admission of the spouses and minor children of others accepted for settlement in this country.

Prison Statistics

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total expenditure on housing and construction costs on *(a)* Ashwell, *(b)* Her Majesty's prison, Welford road, *(c)* Her Majesty's prison, Gartree, *(d)* Glen Parva youth custody centre and *(e)* Stokenhall in the last 12 months for which figures are available; and how many inmates there are at each institution.

Mr. Mellor: The following table shows expenditure by the Home Office on housing and new capital construction at the existing establishments mentioned during the period 1 March 1985 to 28 February 1986, and the number of inmates at each establishment on 7 March 1986:

	Housing	Construction	Inmate population
	£	£	
HM Prison Ashwell	1,397	1,125,633	365
HM Prison Leicester	7,403	15,767	424
HM Prison Gartree	4,787	59,762	306
HM Youth Custody and Remand Centre Glen Parva	Nil	12,262	729

HM prison Stocken, which opened in July 1985, is a new establishment, constructed by the Property Services Agency at an estimated cost of £12,751,000 for the prison and £2,510,000 for the associated staff housing. Expenditure incurred by the Property Services Agency and the Home Office during the period 1 February 1985 to 31 January 1986, the last 12-month period for which figures are available, totalled £861,379 on prison construction and £1,312,000 on housing. On 7 March 1986 Stocken's inmate population was 279.

Children and Young Persons Act 1933

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases have been brought to court under section 7 (2) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933; and how many orders have been made under that subsection in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member from Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) on 13 March, at columns 534-35.

Civil Defence

Mr. Peter Rees asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is satisfied with the state of civil defence preparations in east Kent, in view of Dover's strategic position.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Yes. The county council has made excellent progress in implementing the 1983 regulations, and Dover has appointed its own part-time emergency planning officer.

Indictable Offences (Reading)

Sir Gerard Vaughan asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many indictable offences were recorded in Reading in 1978 and in the latest year for which figures are available, respectively.

Mr. Mellor: The information collected centrally relates to police force areas and is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (tables 2.4 and

2.5 of the issue for 1984, Cmnd. 9621) and Home Office "Statistical Bulletins" (table 6 of issue No. 4/86). Comparisons with years prior to 1980 can be misleading because of changes in the counting rules from the beginning of 1980. Thames Valley police force recorded 74,400 notifiable offences in 1980 and 109,100 in 1985.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of staffing requirements for the immigration service to deal with persons arriving at Waterloo station on trains using the Channel fixed link.

Mr. Waddington: No decisions have yet been taken about the methods by which immigration control will be exercised over passengers using the Channel fixed link.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of staffing requirements for the Metropolitan police as a result of increased traffic flow generated by passengers arriving at Waterloo on trains using the Channel fixed link.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that the Metropolitan police have not so far considered what impact, if any, the Channel fixed link might have on traffic levels in the vicinity of Waterloo station or on their work load. The policing of the station itself is the responsibility of the British Transport police.

Drunk-driving

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the annual number of drivers *(a)* charged and *(b)* convicted of drunk driving offences in each year from 1970 to 1985; and how many breathalyser tests were carried out in each year in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: The available information for court proceedings and findings of guilt, relates to offences of driving and so on, after consuming alcohol and taking drugs, and is published annually in table 1 of "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables". Information on findings of guilt over the past decade is also summarised in table 5 of Home Office "Statistical Bulletin" issue 28/85, "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales 1984" and figures for earlier years are summarised in issue 23/81. Information on breath tests over the past decade is published in table 1 of Home Office "Statistical Bulletin" issue 18/85, "Statistics of Breath Tests, England and Wales, 1984"; earlier data are summarised in table 10 of Home Office "Statistical Bulletin" issue 23/81. Figures for 1985 will not become available until later this year.

French National Front

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy that no French National Front member will be permitted to enter the United Kingdom for any reason; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: No.

EMPLOYMENT

Leeds (Interdepartmental Task Force)

Mr. Fatchett asked the Paymaster General whether he will announce the area in Leeds to be covered by the interdepartmental task force established following his statement of 6 February.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have not yet finally settled the boundaries of the Leeds task force. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as we have finalised the area.

Parental Leave

Mr. Dubs asked the Paymaster General which European Economic Community Governments have opposed the implementation of the European Economic Community draft directive on parental leave; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: At the December Social Affairs Council of Ministers meeting which I attended, several member states apart from the United Kingdom indicated that they had difficulties with various aspects of the proposal. After a broad discussion, the Luxembourg President concluded that no agreement could be reached on the draft directive. Neither at this nor at any previous Council has a vote been taken.

YTS

Mr. Lawler asked the Paymaster General if he is satisfied with the progress being made in Bradford to provide sufficient places under the two-year YTS due to commence on 1 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Yes. Progress in setting up two-year YTS in Bradford has been excellent. Already by 25 February, the latest date for which statistics are available, 92 per cent. of the required places were definitely or likely to be provided. Around 93 per cent. of basic places have been found, together with 86 per cent. of premium places, which are designed to help young people and parts of the country with special needs. The position is being regularly monitored.

Departmental Suppliers

Mr. Ottaway asked the Paymaster General what is the average time it takes his Department to pay suppliers of goods and services to his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: During the first 11 months of the current financial year to the end of February 1986 the average time taken in our Department's finance offices from receipt of an invoice from a supplier to dispatch of a payment has been five working days.

Job Release Schemes

Mr. Sayeed asked the Paymaster General if he will announce the results of the review of the rates of allowance payable under both the job release scheme and the part-time job release scheme.

Mr. Lang: Following our annual review of allowances, the rates payable under the full-time job release scheme from 7 April will be as follows:

For disabled men aged 60, 61, 62 and 63 (and for men who have joined the scheme aged 62 and 63) who are married with a dependent wife whose net income from all sources does not exceed £13 a week, £74·00 a week, taxable; for all others £60·65 a week, taxable.

For women aged 59 and men aged 64 who are married with a dependent spouse whose net income from all sources does not exceed £13 a week; £65·50 a week, tax free; and for all others £51·95 a week, tax free.

The part-time job release scheme will close on 30 May in order to concentrate resources on more effective forms of provision. None the less, the rates of allowances for those who have entered the scheme on or before that date will also be increased from 7 April as follows:

For disabled men aged 60 and 61 and men aged 62 and 63 who are married with a dependent wife whose net income from all sources does not exceed £13 a week; £42·35 a week taxable; for all others £35·15 a week, taxable.

For women aged 59 and men aged 64 who are married with a dependent spouse whose net income from all sources does not exceed £13 a week; £37·00 a week, tax free; for all others £30·10 a week, tax free.

TRANSPORT

Chemicals (Conveyance)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if picramic acid has been *(a)* approved as a dangerous substance that is permitted for conveyance by road and *(b)* classified for the purpose of assigning a hazard warning sign on transporting vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. There is no evidence that the substance is transported in quantity.

Railways (Punctuality)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps the British Railways Board is taking to seek to improve the punctuality of express services.

Mr. David Mitchell: This is a management matter for the board. I understand it is currently putting more resources into improving punctuality where it knows performance is poor.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received about British Rail service punctuality in the last 12 months.

Mr. David Mitchell: Separate records are not kept for representations on punctuality. On quality of service generally, I estimate that about 400 representations have been received over the last year.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Couchman asked the Secretary of State for Transport by what mechanism the Government plan to monitor the operation of the concession agreement with respect to the level of charges for the proposed fixed link to ensure that tunnel charges are not contrary to Her Majesty's Government's competition policy.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Director General of Fair Trading has a duty to keep under review and collect information about commercial activities in the United Kingdom in order to fulfil his functions under competition legislation. In addition, under the terms of the concession agreement, the concessionaires will be required to notify the intergovernmental commission of their tariffs at least 15 days before they come into force.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport what study has been done by his Department to determine whether there would be sufficient spare capacity on underground trains at the two rush hours to take the projected level of Channel fixed link travellers; and what allowance was made for the probability that most of the additional travellers would be carrying one or more pieces of luggage.

Mr. David Mitchell: British Rail has commissioned transport consultants to examine access by international travellers to and from Waterloo. It has also consulted London Regional Transport. BR believes that the underground lines serving Waterloo can accommodate this new traffic. Underground trains at Waterloo are most heavily loaded from 8 am to 9 am but levels are around a third down on 1973 and BR does not envisage international trains arriving at Waterloo during this peak hour. Luggage handling is clearly a matter that will need to be taken into account by the operators.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what study has been made by his Department of the effect of a single terminal for Channel fixed link trains at Waterloo on traffic on Westminster bridge road, Westminster bridge, York road, Stamford street, Waterloo bridge, the Strand underpass, Waterloo road, and Baylis road disaggregated by time of day, day of week, month, type of vehicle, and speed of journey;

(2) what arrangements will be made for private car, taxi, coach and other set-down and pick-up provision *(a)* within the station boundaries and *(b)* in the Waterloo area that is bounded by Lambeth road, Blackfriars road and the River Thames, as a result of the proposed Waterloo terminal for the Channel fixed link;

(3) what estimate he has of the effects of the proposed terminal at Waterloo of the Channel fixed link on existing parking facilities in the Waterloo area bounded by Lambeth road, Blackfriars road and the River Thames; what additional *(a)* on-street and *(b)* off-street parking provision will be introduced in the area for (i) coaches and (ii) other vehicles as a result; and whether this will be consequent on a survey of potential users;

(4) what information he has on the projected effects of a single central London terminal for Channel fixed link rail passengers upon traffic in the Waterloo area bounded by Lambeth road, Blackfriars road and the River Thames;

(5) what study has been made by his Department of the overall impact of all the additional vehicular traffic to be created by the proposed Channel tunnel terminal at Waterloo.

Mr. David Mitchell: British Rail's traffic consultants are assessing the numbers of private cars, taxis and coaches which will use Waterloo station when the new facilities are operational. They have identified a number of possible sites within the station area for parking and for setting down and picking up passengers. British Rail is discussing the possible impact on the local roads with Lambeth borough council.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will survey the attitudes of existing users of Waterloo to the proposed use of part of Waterloo station for passengers using the Channel fixed link and take account of the views expressed in formulating his policy towards the precise siting of the terminal;

(2) if he will undertake a study of the effects, broken down by time of day, day of week, and month, of the

proposed new Channel fixed link passenger services on *(a)* the existing southern region rail service in general and *(b)* the south London line in particular.

Mr. David Mitchell: These are matters for British Rail. It is its normal procedure to explain new developments to its passengers and to the relevant transport users' consultative committees; and to invite their comments. It is also planning to undertake a major train planning exercise so that the new international services cause no disbenefit to existing passengers on Southern region.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what projections he has made, and based on what assumptions, of the number of rail passengers that would use the proposed Channel fixed link terminal at Waterloo at the commencement of the service, and in each of the 10 years thereafter;

(2) what is his estimate of the additional number of train journeys in and out of Waterloo which will be generated by Channel fixed link traffic, showing separately *(a)* late-night journeys, *(b)* early-morning journeys and *(c)* journeys to maintenance yards;

(3) what estimate he has of the expected number of Channel fixed link passengers who would use Waterloo east station by *(a)* time of day, *(b)* day of week and *(c)* month, in each of the first 10 years of operation of the new link.

Mr. David Mitchell: Traffic forecasts and service planning are matters for British Rail. Its proposals for through rail services are referred to in the consultation document it has sent to local authorities.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport what new track British Rail proposes to lay at Waterloo station for the proposed terminal for the Channel fixed link.

Mr. David Mitchell: BR plans to lay new track on the north side of Waterloo station for the platforms serving international trains.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport who is to *(a)* own and *(b)* manage the proposed terminal at Waterloo for the Channel fixed link.

Mr. David Mitchell: British Rail.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport what evaluation he has made of the costs and benefits of integrating the Channel link train passenger traffic with services to Gatwick and Heathrow via Victoria.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is for British Rail to plan services and to develop investment proposals.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what information he as on the projected effects of a single central London terminal for Channel fixed link rail passengers over the following 10 years upon *(a)* the nature and costs of housing, *(b)* the level of hotel or hostel development, *(c)* shop rents and facilities and *(d)* the level of office development in the Waterloo area bounded by Lambeth road, Blackfriars road, and the River Thames;

(2) what estimate he has made of the effects of a single central London terminal for Channel fixed link rail passengers at Waterloo upon the population by household size and age, in the Waterloo area bounded by Lambeth road, Blackfriars road and the River Thames;

(3) what estimates he has made of the effects of the decision to locate a single central London terminal for the Channel fixed link rail passengers at Waterloo on the demand for housing, hotel and other use on the Waterloo area bounded by Lambeth road, Blackfriars road and the River Thames during the period of construction.

Mr. David Mitchell: These are matters for the local planning authority; BR is consulting them about its proposals. BR has met the authority and is providing them with appropriate information.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of staffing requirements for the transport police as a result of increased traffic flow generated by passengers arriving at Waterloo on trains using the Channel fixed link.

Mr. David Mitchell: None. British Transport police staffing requirements are a matter for the British Transport Police committee.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will request British Rail to revise its consultation document of 27 January so as to include specific costings.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is not British Rail's normal practice to provide this information in consultation douments and I see no reason to ask it to do so on this occasion.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will ask British Rail to publish its response to representations made by the London borough of Lambeth and local residents concerning the use of Waterloo station as the London terminal of the Channel fixed link.

Mr. David Mitchell: This is a matter for BR.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends to seek to remdve from the London boroûgh of Lambeth the power to control developments arising from the proposed use of Waterloo station as the London terminal for the Channel fixed link.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Government have no such plans except to the extent that development by British Rail or the operational use of its land will be included in the hybrid Bill.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he intends to oblige British Rail to take to reduce the noise and environmental impact of the proposed Waterloo terminal of the Channel fixed link.

Mr. David Mitchell: I know that British Rail will take all reasonable measures to reduce noise and environmental impacts but I do not intend to impose any special obligations on it on these matters. Individuals or bodies affected by any noise or environmental nuisance will be able to make representations to the local authority or to a magistrates' court under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 or the Public Health Act 1936 in the normal way.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received an application from British Rail for works to be carried out in Stewart's lane in the vicinity of Waterloo station.

Mr. David Mitchell: BR is considering the local planning authority about these works. Authority will be sought for them in the hybrid Bill.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates he has of the total cost of widening the viaduct at Carlisle lane.

Mr. David Mitchell: British Rail estimates the cost of widening the viaduct from the station to Carlisle lane would be around £13 million.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the form and scope of the intended consultations on British Rail's arrangements for a Channel fixed link terminal and on the identity of those who will conduct them.

Mr. David Mitchell: British Rail has prepared a consultation document which includes information about its proposal to develop facilities for international travellers at Waterloo station. British Rail is consulting and meeting the relevant local authorities, and it intends to meet local residents as well. British Rail's director, Channel tunnel, is acting on behalf of the board in these consultations.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates he has of the total cost of all alterations and additions that British Rail wish to make within the boundary of Waterloo station in connection with the proposed Channel fixed link terminal.

Mr. David Mitchell: British Rail at present envisages that it will need to spend up to around £45 million at Waterloo station on work to provide new international passenger services.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what studies he has made of possible terminals for *(a)* day passenger, *(b)* sleeper and *(c)* freight traffic generated by the Channel fixed link;

(2) what studies he has made of the effects of dispersing Channel fixed link traffic to several terminals in the London area;

(3) what role was played by commercial or economic costs in deciding upon the Waterloo terminal for the Channel fixed link;

(4) what account was taken, in considering which of the central London terminals might be suitable as a terminal for cross-Channel passengers, of the results of detailed studies of land use in the central London sections of the inner London boroughs potentially affected.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is for British Rail to propose the location of its London terminus facilities for through services to the continent and to consult affected interests. The necessary approval will be given by the hybrid Bill. British Rail has examined 13 potential sites and has concluded that the most practical solution is to develop a single passenger terminus at Waterloo and to use its depot at Willesden for through freight operations. It is aware that all its capital expenditure on through rail services must be on a strictly commercial basis.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that the roads infrastructure in the north of England, especially that part servicing ports, is rapidly improved to ensure that the north is in no way disadvantaged by increased investment in roads in the south-east planned in connection with the projected Channel fixed link.

Mr. Ridley: Improved national road links to the Channel ports are necessary in order to meet increasing traffic needs irrespective of whether the fixed link is built. The needs of national roads throughout the country and our priorities for expenditure are regularly reviewed. Allocation of resources for new local authority roads are, similarly, based on the needs of traffic. I take great care to see that the north-west is not "disadvantaged".

Drink-Driving

Mr. Gordon Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the annual figure, in each year from 1970 to 1985, of traffic fatalities in England and Wales; and what proportions were caused by drunk-driving.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The figures are given in "Road Accidents Great Britain 1984" (table 3, page 51), a copy of which is in the Library. Causes of accidents are not recorded, but an article on pages 25-29 of the same publication concludes that in 1984 one in four deaths were in accidents where a driver or pedestrian had consumed excess alcohol.

Mr. Gordon Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the total cost in the United Kingdom of drunk-driving fatalities and injuries in each year since 1980.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Precise figures are not available. Background information on the cost of road casualties and on the availability of data on drinking and driving in Great Britain is included in "Road Accidents Great Britain 1984". A copy is in the Library. Information from Northern Ireland is collected in a slightly different form.

A broad assessment of the approximate costs of fatalities and injuries in accidents involving drunken drivers in the United Kingdom for the years 1980-1984 is as follows:

£ million 1985 prices

	fatalities	*injuries*
1980	235	55
1981	225	50
1982	245	55
1983	175	45
1984	185	45

Casualty data for 1985 are not yet available.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department is sponsoring any research into drinking and driving.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. The Department of Transport continues to support research into the problems of drink and driving. The work is undertaken by the Department's Transport and Road Research Laboratory. The relevant programme is being placed in the Library of the House.

Meteorological Services

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what proportion of the cost of the meteorological services for the civil aviation industry are met by British civil aviation carriers and foreign carriers, respectively;

(2) what percentages of the charges for meteorological services for the civil aviation industry are borne by private aviation in the United Kingdom;

(3) if he will make a statement as to the cost per civil aircraft per annum for meteorological services in the United Kingdom; and what information he has as to how this compares with the costs borne by European carriers in France, Germany and Italy.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Coastguard (Humber)

Mr. John Townend asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the level of coastguard services on the east coast in the Humber area.

Mr. Ridley: Yes. However, early next year it is planned to re-locate Her Majesty's Coastguard's maritime rescue sub-centre Humber from Spurn Point to Bridlington. It is planned to take over as the regional headquarters from Her Majesty's Coastguard Great Yarmouth which will be retained as a sub-centre with no loss of operational responsibility. It is hoped to complete the move before Easter 1987, by which time some reorganisation of regional facilities will also have been completed. The overall effect will be a much improved and efficient search and rescue service on the east coast without any change in staff levels.

DEFENCE

Ammunition Contracts

Mr. McWilliam asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those countries which tender for his Department's ammunition contracts; and what information he has as to which countries invite tenders from United Kingdom ammunition producing companies.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In recent years, tenders for Ministry of Defence ammunition contracts have been invited from Austria, Belgium, Federal Republic of Germany, France, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and the United States of America. A substantial number of countries invite tenders from United Kingdom ammunition companies. However, it has been the consistent policy of successive Governments not to disclose particulars of defence sales business with other countries, as these are matters of commercial confidentiality.

Manpower

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn on 6 March, *Official Report*, column 264-65, if he will give the manpower shortage of *(a)* officers and *(b)* other ranks, both numerically and as a percentage of the whole in (i) the Royal Armoured Corps, (ii) the Royal Artillery, (iii) the seaman branch of the Royal Navy and (iv) the Royal Marines.

Mr. Lee: For security reasons I am not able to give numerical details of the level of any under or over-manning in particular areas of the services. However, the percentage shortfall-excess against the trained requirement for the crops and branches in question is as follows:

	Officers per cent.	*Other ranks per cent.*
Royal Armoured Corps	−2·8	+2·2
Royal Artillery	−4·2	+1·4
Royal Naval Seaman Officers	−2·2	—
Royal Naval Ratings—Operations Branch	—	−0·4
Royal Marines	−3·9	−2·7

Notes

1. The figures all relate to 31 December 1985, except for the Royal Marines, which relate to 1 December 1985.

2. There is no "Seaman Branch" for Royal Naval ratings. The figures shown are for the "Operations Branch", which is broadly equivalent to the seaman specialisation for officers.

Army Boots and Combat Smocks

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the replacement programme for DMS boots and DPM combat smocks for the Army and the Territorial Army; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The programme for the replacement of the Boot DMS by the Boot Combat High (BCH) was completed in January 1985. All male personnel in the Regular and Territorial Army are therefore in possession of the new boot, but the WRAC continue to wear the Boot DMS pending development of a suitable ankle-boot alternative.

As far as the issue of Smocks Combat DPM is concerned, all Regular servicemen are already in receipt of their full entitlement; issues to the TA should be completed within the next six months. Service women are currently issued with combat smocks only when deployed to field force units.

Military Sales

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the existing United Kingdom-United States memorandum of understanding on military sales expires; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The 1975 United States-United Kingdom defence procurement memorandum of understanding, which had, originally, a 10-year life, was extended for a further year until 1 January 1986.

A new co-operation MOU, with similar terms to the earlier one, was signed in December 1985 and will remain valid until 1 January 1995.

The new MOU is being printed and a copy will be placed in the Library of the House as soon as possible.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Defence what rights have been granted by Her Majesty's Government to the United States Government, or their agencies, to investigate research work in the United Kingdom which might have a military application; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: None.

Crown Proceedings Act

Mr. Churchill asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to publish the results of the review of the Crown Proceedings Act as it relates to service personnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The review of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947 has not yet been completed. As soon as it has and decisions have been taken an announcement will be made.

Meteorological Services

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out in the *Official Report*, in tabular form, the cost to the civil aviation industry of meteorological services for each of the last five years.

Mr. Lee: Charges raised by the Meteorological Office against airlines and other civil aviation companies for services supplied directly to them in the financial years shown:

	£
1981-82	6,500
1982-83	—
1983-84	2,280
1984-85	3,763
1985-86*	16,350

* To date.

Charges raised by the Meteorological Office against the Civil Aviation Authority for services requested for national and International Civil Aviation Organisation purposes in the financial years shown.

	£
1981-82	12,663,268
1982-83	13,144,275
1983-84	14,263,668
1984-85	15,426,487
1985-86*	14,814,661

* To date.

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what charges for meteorological services have been made in each of the last five years for the British shipping industry.

Mr. Lee: Charges raised against the United Kingdom off shore oil industry, which includes some services to shipping used by that industry came to:

Financial year	£
1981-82	998,000
1982-83	1,077,000
1983-84	1,314,000
1984-85	1,203,000
1985-86*	1,300,000

* To date.

The element included in the above for shipping is not separately identifiable. However, charges raised by the Meteorological Office for services to the British shipping industry came to:

Financial year	£
1981-82	36,600
1982-83	10,100
1983-84	18,000
1984-85	32,000
1985-86*	63,200

* To date.

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost to the civil aviation industry for meteorological services in the year 1986-87.

Mr. Lee: Charges raised by the Meteorological Office for services supplied directly to airlines and other civil aviation companies is estimated to be in the region of £20,000. The estimated cost of services to be supplied to the Civil Aviation Authority to meet its national and international requirements is £15,000,000.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Disarmament

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list the international nuclear disarmament negotiations where the United Kingdom is *(a)* currently playing a full negotiating role and *(b)* not directly involved but is regularly in contact with the negotiating parties.

Mr. Renton: The only international nuclear disarmament negotiations in progress at present are the bilateral United States/Soviet nuclear and space talks at Geneva. We are in regular contact with both parties.

SCOTLAND

Surgical Operations

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the numbers awaiting surgical operations in each of the health board areas in Scotland and the number completed during the past year for which figures are available.

Mr. John MacKay: The numbers on waiting lists of surgical specialties as at 30 September 1984 and the number of cases operated on during the year 1984 were as follows:

	Numbers on waiting lists of surgical specialties	*Number of cases operated on (including day cases)*
Argyll and Clyde	7,534	19,004
Ayrshire and Arran	4,610	21,642
Borders	238	3,547
Dumfries and Galloway	2,507	8,926
Fife	5,730	19,241
Forth Valley	2,515	18,556
Grampian	8,441	36,166
Greater Glasgow	17,400	80,715
Highland	1,697	14,286
Lanarkshire	6,879	31,280
Lothian	13,018	66,172
Orkney	—	974
Shetland	—	1,059
Tayside	7,085	34,717
Western Isles	43	1,317
All Scotland	77,697	357,602

Forestry Commission

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give figures to show for the years 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985 the number of *(a)* industrial workers and *(b)* non-industrial workers employed by the Forestry Commission in (i) Scotland, (ii) England and (iii)

Wales; and if he will also express the figures as a percentage of the total Forestry Commission industrial work force and non-industrial work force.

Mr. Rifkind: The information is as follows:

Industrial Workers

Year ended 31 March	*Scotland*	*Percentage of work-force*	*England*	*Percentage of work-force*	*Wales*	*Percentage of work-force*	*Total*
1981	2,580	44·5	2,153	37·3	1,052	18·2	5,785
1982	2,410	44·2	2,050	37·6	990	18·2	5,450
1983	2,266	43·7	1,993	38·5	920	17·8	5,179
1984	2,087	43·9	1,837	38·7	825	17·4	4,749
1985	1,780	43·4	1,597	39·0	723	17·6	4,100
			Non Industrial Workers				
1981	1,019	47·0	839	38·7	309	14·3	2,167
1982	984	46·9	821	39·2	290	13·9	2,095
1983	988	47·7	797	38·5	285	13·8	2,070
1984	1,026	49·1	768	36·9	293	14·0	2,087
	(18)		(19)		(24)		(61)
1985	1,054	48·5	814	37·5	306	14·0	2,174
	(62)		(64)		(81)		(207)

Note: The net increase in the number of non-industrial staff in 1984 and 1985 was due to 61 clerks being transferred from the industrial grades in 1984 and 146 in 1985. This transfer accounts in part for the marked reduction in the number of industrial staff; other factors are the reorganisation of work, the employment of contractors in some areas and continuing improvements in productivity. The number of industrial clerks transferred to non-industrial grades is shown in the table in brackets.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the total acreages of land owned by the Forestry Commission in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England and *(c)* Wales on any convenient date in each of the past five years.

Mr. Rifkind: The areas of land managed by the Forestry Commission as at 31 March in each year were as follows:

Hectares

Year	*Scotland*	*England*	*Wales*	*Total*
1981	800,052	303,271	160,674	1,263,997
1982	797,511	302,193	158,979	1,258,683
1983	793,540	299,685	157,699	1,250,924
1984	759,758	295,004	154,410	1,209,172
1985	741,993	288,080	150,901	1,180,974

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the total acreages of planted land owned by the Forestry Commission in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England and *(c)* Wales on any convenient date in each of the past five years.

Mr. Rifkind: The areas of plantations managed by the Forestry Commission as at 31 March in each year were as follows:

Hectares

Year	*Scotland*	*England*	*Wales*	*Total*
1981	508,015	251,060	136,642	895,717
1982	517,032	251,624	136,847	905,503
1983	521,515	250,358	136,849	908,722
1984	518,839	246,845	135,998	901,682
1985	516,352	241,378	134,407	892,137

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish figures in the *Official Report* to show the percentage of Forestry Commission owned land in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England and *(c)* Wales at any convenient date for each of the past five years.

Mr. Rifkind: The percentages, which have not altered significantly over the past five years, are as follows:

	Per cent.
Scotland	63
England	24
Wales	13

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what have been the total sums raised to date from the selling of Forestry Commission land in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England and *(c)* Wales since the passing of the Forestry Act 1981; and if he will express for each country the average selling price per acre.

Mr. Rifkind: The information for the period up to 21 February 1986 is as follows:

	Receipts from sales of forest land £ million	*Average sale price per hectare £*
Scotland	19·79	727
England	21·97	1,516
Wales	6·24	1,360

In addition, the Forestry Commission has sold agricultural land and residential properties for a total sum of £31·17 million.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what acreages of *(a)* planted and *(b)* unplanted and have been sold by the Forestry Commission in (i) Scotland, (ii) England and (iii) Wales since the passing of the Forestry Act 1981.

Mr. Rifkind: The information for the period up to 21 February 1986 is as follows:

	Areas sold (hectares)		
	Planted land	*Unplanted forestry land*	*Total*
Scotland	22,705	4,508	27,213
England	13,776	709	14,485
Wales	4,294	297	4,591

In addition, the Forestry Commission had sold 50,574 hectares of agricultural and other non-forestry land up to 31 March 1985, the latest date to which comprehensive area figures are readily available in respect of such land.

NHS (Road Traffic Accidents)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the annual cost, in each year since 1970, to the National Health Service in Scotland of road traffic accidents; and what proportion is attributable to drunk driving offences.

Mr. Ancram: Using estimates produced by the Department of Transport for the costs of injury road accidents in Great Britain, the estimated cost of injury road accidents in Scotland to the National Health Service at 1984 prices was as follows:

	£ million at 1984 prices
1970	16·7
1971	16·8
1972	17·0
1973	17·1
1974	16·0
1975	14·8
1976	15·0
1977	15·2
1978	16·0
1979	16·2
1980	15·4
1981	15·4
1982	15·7
1983	13·7
1984	14·0

No information is held centrally on the blood alcohol levels of drivers or riders killed in road accidents; it is not, therefore, possible to determine the proportion of costs attributable to drunk driving offences.

Drink Driving Offences

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what research his Department has undertaken into drink-related driving offences.

Mr. Ancram: Research on traffic and road safety matters is generally undertaken for the United Kingdom as a whole by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory, which is currently studying the background to drinking habits of motorists.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give figures, for each year from 1970 to 1985, of the numbers of drivers *(a)* charged and *(b)* convicted of drunk-driving in Scotland; and if he will give the number of breath tests conducted annually.

Mr. John Mackay: The available information is as follows. Central collection of annual data on breath tests was discontinued in 1984.

Drunk Driving+

Year	*Persons proceeded against*	*Persons against whom a charge was proved*	*Initial breath tests conducted*
1970	8,983	8,767	14,709
1971	10,291	10,109	16,137
1972	10,671	10,480	18,213
1973	12,208	11,989	19,980
1974	12,928	12,689	21,487
1975	12,419	12,168	20,172
1976	10,353	10,137	17,675
1977	9,387	9,170	17,135
1978	11,337	11,086	19,905
1979	11,636	11,435	20,823
1980	12,779	12,513	20,667
1981	11,460	11,244	18,225
1982	10,666	10,429	18,622
1983	11,767	11,556	17,594
1984	12,500	12,213	N/A
1985* (Jan-Sep)	9,072	8,892	N/A

* Provisional
N/A=Not available.
+Includes driving, or being in charge of, a motor vehicle—
(a) while unfit due to drink or drugs;
(b) while blood alcohol content above the prescribed limit; and failing to provide breath, blood or urine specimens.

Traffic Accidents (Statistics)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give figures to show the number of traffic fatalities in Scotland each year since 1970; and if he will indicate, for each year, the number related to drunk-driving offences.

Mr. Ancram: The number of road accident fatalities in Scotland was as follows:

Year	*Number*
1970	815
1971	866
1972	855
1973	855
1974	825
1975	769
1976	783
1977	811
1978	820
1979	810
1980	700
1981	677
1982	701
1983	624
1984	593

It is not possible to estimate the total number of such fatalities related to drunk driving offences, since no information is held centrally on the blood alcohol levels of drivers or riders killed in road accidents. However, the number of deaths resulting from accidents involving drivers or riders whose breath tests subsequently proved positive or who refused a test, was:

Year	*Number*
1979	38
1980	58
1981	35
1982	38
1983	39
1984	25

Figures prior to 1979 are not available.

Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland why there has been a delay in publishing the responses to his consultative document on the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The closing date for replies to the document issued by my right hon. and learned Friend was 7 March, but a number of late replies were received. Copies of all the responses have now been sent to the hon. Member. The responses are available for public inspection in the Scottish Office Library, St. Andrew's House, Edinburgh.

Dornie Bridge (Replacement)

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on current progress towards the construction of a replacement bridge at Dornie in south-west Ross-shire; and when it is intended that work will commence on the site.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend has received 13 objections to the draft road orders. A draft compulsory purchase order has been published and the objection period ends on 28 March. My right hon. and learned Friend will then consider whether to hold a public local inquiry into the objections to these orders. The start date for the works will depend on whether an inquiry is held and, if so, on its timing and outcome.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

India (Helicopters)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what purpose helicopters supplied to India through the use of aid moneys will serve.

Mr. Raison: The helicopters will be used primarily in the Indian oil and natural gas industry, and thus to help strengthen India's economy. To secure maximum efficient operation of the helicopters they may also be used in certain other transport operations of the Indian Helicopter Corporation.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Production

Mr. Cash asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking in the Council of Ministers of the European Economic Community and in the United Kingdom to evaluate the use of nitrogen fertiliser and other means of expanding production and its effects on levels of production on different types of land; what meetings have taken place; what official papers have been written on the subject; and if he will lay such papers in the Library.

Mrs. Fenner: Such evaluation involves technical assessments, the consideration of which can best be undertaken at national level. My own Department devotes considerable research and advisory effort to the efficient use of nitrogen fertiliser and issues publications on the subject from time to time. As an example, I am placing a copy of ADAS reference book 209 "Fertilizer recommendations 1985-86" in the Library of the House. There have been no discussions on the use of nitrogen fertilizers and other means of expanding agricultural production nor on its effects on levels of production on different types of land within the Council of Ministers.

Food Additives

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider implementing recommendations 33 and 47 of the second report on food labelling of the Food Standards Committee (1979).

Mrs. Fenner: Recommendation 33 of the second report on food labelling is implemented in regulation 14 of the Food Labelling Regulations 1984. This does not preclude the use of the heading recommended in the report but it cannot be required because the EC food labelling directive (79/112) requires only the use of the word "ingredients" at the head of the list.

Recommendation 46 of the report, which deals with the use of the word "flavour" is implemented in schedule 7 of the food labelling regulations. At the time the regulations were made it was not considered appropriate to incorporate in them the supplementary wording suggested in recommendation 47.

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Clay asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state the amount currently stored in each intervention store within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jopling: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to him on 18 March.

Council of Fisheries Ministers

Mr. Maclennan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Council of Fisheries Ministers meeting on 18 March.

Mr. Gummer: This meeting of the Council was cancelled.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Scientific and Technical Education

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps his Department is taking to seek to improve scientific and technical education.

Mr. Chris Patten: At the school level, the Government's policy statement "Science 5 to 16", published last year after consultation with the education partners, set as objectives that all pupils should be properly introduced to science in the primary school, and should continue to study a broad and balanced science programme until the age of 16. We have followed this up by supporting expenditure of over £6 million per year on the development of primary school science through education support grants.

The White Paper "Better Schools" included these policies and also stated the Government's view that: primary schools should provide opportunities throughout

the curriculum for craft and practical work leading up to some experience of design and technology and of solving problems; every pupil should take part in practical and technological work in a number of subjects through the five years of compulsory secondary education; and all pupils should be introduced to new technology and how it is affecting people's life and work.

Both the microelectronics education programme and its successor body, the microelectronics support unit, seek to improve scientific and technical education through stimulating the use of new technology in schools. In all, the Govenment are now funding over £5 million a year of work in this field.

The Department is closely involved in the technical and vocational education initiative, administered for the Government through the Manpower Services Commission. This is stimulating greater relevance across the curriculum with an increased emphasis on technical and vocational elements in science and technology as well as other subjects. In addition, some £18 million is to be available for England and Wales during 1986-87 under a scheme administered by the MSC to support in-service training related to the objectives of the TVEI. Training for teachers of science and technology in maintained schools and further education institutions is included within the scope of that scheme.

Under the in-service teacher training grants scheme the Department is supporting expenditure of up to £2 million a year by local authorities on the in-service training of science co-ordinators in primary schools and heads of science departments in secondary schools, and a further £1 million on the in-service training of heads of craft, design and technology departments in secondary schools.

One factor affecting progress on scientific and technical education in schools is a shortage of secondary school teachers in mathematics, the physical sciences and technology-related subjects where there is keen competition from industry and commerce for the limited number of people with the relevant qualifications. The Government believe that the ACAS-assisted negotiations, which began on 7 March, should seek to introduce a teachers' pay structure sufficiently flexible to enable higher salaries to be paid where necessary to attract and retain teachers whose skills are in relatively higher demand elsewhere. Meanwhile, the Government are taking action to reduce the problem of shortage. We have recently announced a bursary scheme (£1,200 tax-free in addition to a maintenance award) to graduates and mature students entering one or two-year teacher training courses in mathematics, physics or craft, design and technology, and we are consulting our partners, the local authorities and others about complementary initiatives.

In further and higher education a range of measures is aimed at improving scientific and technical education through closer links with industry and commerce. These include: financial support for the teaching company and other schemes which link industry and higher education in collaborative research and postgraduate training projects; the college-employer links project, which investigates and strengthens links between further education colleges and industry; responding to requests from industry and others for additional higher education student places in skill shortage areas — most recently in the engineering and technology programme which will provide about 5,000 extra places by the end of the decade; and appointing more industrialists to national planning bodies for further and higher education and to the governing bodies and councils of individual institutions. Additionally, university equipment grants are being increased by a total of £34 million between 1985-86 and 1988-89 so as to support scientific research of particular excellence and industrial promise.

Under the education support grant scheme the Government have also allocated £13 million in 1985-86 and a further £9 million in 1986-87 to help equip further education colleges so that students in vocational subjects can be made more familiar with industrial and commercial applications of information technology.

In higher education the number of full-time equivalent home and EC students studying subjects in the engineering, technology and science fields increased by 30 per cent. between 1979 and 1984, including 57 per cent. in the public sector. The academic plans of the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education for the years 1984-85 to 1986-87, which my right hon. Friend has accepted as a basis for the distribution of the advanced further education pool, have had as one priority to sustain that expansion. Specifically, my right hon. Friend approved, on the advice of the NAB, the setting aside from the AFE pool in each of the years 1985-86 and 1986-87 of nearly £3 million to support the selective funding of research in biotechnology and other technological fields.

Teachers (Pay and Conditions)

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will list the major differences between the working conditions, as laid down by either contract or practice, in so far as they are known to him, of first-year teachers in secondarty schools in England, France and West Germany;

(2) if he will list the starting salaries, in so far as they are known to him as expected on 1 April 1986, of first-year teachers in secondary schools in England, France and West Germany, expressed in pounds sterling;

(3) if he will list the maximum attainable salaries of seconday school teachers in the state sector, with no additional responsibility allowances, after five years' teaching in England, France and Germany, in so far as the information is available to him, and expressed in pound sterling.

Sir Keith Joseph: This information is not currently available but the European Commission is funding a study of teachers' pay and conditions of service in the 10 member countries the report from this study is expected later this year when I would propose to write to my hon. Friend.

Physics Graduates

Mr. Crouch asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to how many physics graduates were admitted to postgraduate certificate of education courses in 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985; how many went into teaching in each of those years; and what these numbers represent as fractions of the total number of teachers in England and Wales.

Mr. Chris Patten: The number of graduates admitted to postgraduate certificate in education courses in physics in 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, amd 1985 were 443, 489, 428, 408 and 255 respectively. In recent years some 80 per cent. of students who entered PGCE courses of all kinds

completed their training successfully and entered teaching in the maintained sector: there is some evidence that wastage from physics courses may be higher than average.

Information on the total number of physics teachers in secondary schools is available only from the staffing surveys carried out in 1984 in England and Wales when an estimated 13,300 full-time teachers taught physics as a separate subject. The graduate entrants to PGCE quoted above for 1981 to 1985 represented 3 per cent., 4 per cent., 3 per cent., 3 per cent., and 2 per cent. respectively of this total.

Inspectors of Schools (1985 Report)

Mr. Flannery asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will publish the 1985 report of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools.

Sir Keith Joseph: I hope to publish the next report by Her Majesty's Inspectors on the effects of local authority expenditure policies on education provision in England towards the end of May.

New Schools

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the number of new (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools opened in each year since 1955-56; and what is the number and proportion of these schools which are *(a)* voluntary aided and *(b)* voluntary controlled.

Mr. Dunn: The information is not available centrally.

Goods and Services (Payment)

Mr. Ottaway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average time it takes his Department to pay suppliers of goods and services to his Department.

Sir Keith Joseph: Detailed records are not kept, but payment is generally made within 28 days of delivery of goods or completion of services, or in accordance with the terms of a specific contract.

Mr. Nicholas Weever

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he may expect to secure a reply to his letters of 29 November 1985 and 6 February referring to Mr. Nicholas Weever of the School of Architecture.

Mr. Walden: I replied to the letter of 29 November on 24 February. The Department has no record of the receipt of my hon. Friend's letter of 6 February.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the latest position on teachers' pay.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Government want to see better opportunities for better teachers, and better schools giving pupils a better education. Last summer we offered to allow extra spending on teachers' pay in return for an agreement covering pay, pay structure and duties which would help achieve those objectives. Now all these inter-connected issues are on the agenda again, in the ACAS-assisted negotiations in England and Wales and the independent inquiry in Scotland. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I have made no new commitment to allow for extra spending on teachers' pay. When each process is complete, its conclusions will be considered in full. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear on Thursday, the normal formula arrangements will continue to apply.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Service (Employment Changes)

Mr. Wigley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide an analysis by Government Department of the change in Civil Service employment between mid 1979 and mid 1985.

Mr. Brooke: The table provides details of staff in post numbers for Government Departments at 1 July 1979 and 1 July 1985 and the changes between the two dates.

Department	*SIP at 1 July 1979*	*SIP at 1 July 1985*	*Change*
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	13,864	11,264	−2,600
Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce	521	701	+180
Inland Revenue	83,398	69,884	−13,514
Customs and Excise	28,400	25,204	−3,196
Department for National Savings	10,544	7,796	−2,748
Her Majesty's Stationery Office	6,629	3,421	−3,208
Treasury*	1,028	3,396	+2,368
Royal Mint	1,339	975	−364
Central Office of Information	1,182	900	−282
Registry of Friendly Societies	114	124	+10
Government Actuary's Department	56	60	+4
National Investment and Loans Office (including National Debt Office)	45	51	+6
Department of Education and science	2,649	2,417	−232
Victoria and Albert Museum†	595	—	−595
Science Museum†	468	—	−468
Department of Employment	22,392	29,503	+7,111
Health and Safety Commission Executive	4,134	3,582	−552
Manpower Services Commission (including Training and Employment Divisions)	25,252	20,583	−4,669

Department	SIP at 1 July 1979	SIP at 1 July 1985	Change
Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service	819	627	−192
Department of Energy	1,257	1,063	−194
Department of the Environment (excluding PSA)	12,201	6,516	−5,685
Property Services Agency (excluding Crown Suppliers)	35,809	23,983	−11,826
Crown Suppliers (formerly PSA Supplies Division)	3,557	1,919	−1,638
Ordnance Survey	3,598	2,972	−626
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	9,703	8,170	−1,533
Overseas Development Administration	2,200	1,543	−657
Home Office	33,490	36,551	+3,061
Lord Chancellor's Department (including Public Trustees Office)	10,481	10,128	−353
Land Registry	5,551	6,918	+1,367
Public Record Office	420	397	−23
Northern Ireland Office	209	175	−34
Scottish Office (including Royal Scottish Museum)	10,992	10,039	−953
Exchequer Office, Scotland	53	—	−53
Scottish Courts Administration (including Lands Tribunal for Scotland)	843	879	+36
General Register Office, Scotland	380	262	−118
Registers of Scotland	443	847	+404
Scottish Record Office	133	127	−6
Department of Health and Social Security	97,539	92,085	−5,454
Office of Population Censuses and Surveys	2,537	2,107	−430
Department of Trade and Industry	16,927	12,604	−4,323
Export Credits Guarantee Department	1,996	1,753	−243
Office of Fair Trading	293	306	+13
Office of Telecommunications	—	83	+83
Department of Transport	13,698	14,366	+668
Welsh Office	2,595	2,276	−319
Cabinet Office (including Management and Personnel Office and Parliamentary Counsel)†	654	1,652	+998
Civil Service Department*	5,047		−5,047
Charity Commission	322	317	−5
Crown Estate Office	121	29	−92
Director of Public Prosecutions	195	234	+39
Law Officers' Department	19	19	—
Lord Advocate's Department	21	20	−1
Office of Arts and Libraries	—	52	+52
Paymaster General's Office	868	853	−15
Privy Council Office	37	32	−5
Crown Office (Scotland) and Procurator Fiscal Service	771	980	+209
Treasury Solicitor's Department	437	437	—
Civil Service Pay Research unit	62	—	−62
Ministry of Defence¶	244,859	172,981	−71,878
Total	723,747	596,163	−127,584

* In November 1981, the Civil Service Department was abolished, its functions and staff being redistributed between the Treasury and the Management and Personnel Office.

† Accorded trustee status from 1 April 1984; thereafter excluded from the manpower count.

‡ Abolished 1 April 1981; staff reassigned to other departments.

§ Wound up 1 October 1981; staff reassigned to other departments.

¶ Royal Ordnance Factories incorporated as a Companies Act company on 2 January 1985; thereafter excluded from the Ministry of Defence manpower count.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he has made of the potential savings in time of on-train Customs and Excise procedures for passengers using the Channel fixed link.

Mr. Brooke: There are no such potential savings for the bulk of rail passengers on through routes to London who have nothing to declare. They will simply have to walk through the green channel at the proposed Waterloo terminal. However Customs are holding discussions with British Rail about passenger controls on other routes and no decisions have yet been taken.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether specialist staff will be deployed to prevent the import of narcotics in connection with the proposed Waterloo terminal of the Channel fixed link.

Mr. Brooke: Yes, Customs officers deployed at the proposed Waterloo terminal will have exactly the same duties as for similar traffic elsewhere.

Tax Relief

Mr. Frank Field asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will list for 1978-79 and for the latest available date the revenue cost of granting tax relief for (i) life assurances, (ii) mortgage tax relief, (iii) approved pension schemes, (iv) employers' contributions to funded pension schemes, (v) retirement annuity premiums, (vi)

age allowance and (vii) capital gains exemption for selling main residence; if he will express the growth in each of these totals in terms of a percentage increase in *(a)* money terms and *(b)* real terms; and if each set of data for both points in time could be expressed as a percentage of total Government revenue;

(2) if he will estimate for the coming year the revenue cost of granting tax relief on mortgage interest payments.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Marlow asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out for 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively, and estimate for 1985, the budget for 1986 and estimated outturn for 1986 both in cash and real terms *(a)* total community expenditure, *(b)* community expenditure excluding rebates and administrative and institutional costs, *(c)* agricultural expenditure and *(d)* c as a percentage of b.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 March 1986, c. *607-8*]: The table sets out the principal figures, subject to the following limitations. The European Commission has not yet made available details of total expenditure in 1985, so that the figures in the table are taken from the 1985 adopted budget. In addition, the Commission has not yet made firm proposals for changes in 1986 expenditure, and it is therefore impossible at this stage to provide an estimate of outturn for 1986 which may differ from planned expenditure in the 1986 adopted budget. The figures for 1986 are not strictly comparable with those for earlier years since they relate to an expanded Community of 12 member states. Because of this difference in the basis of the figures, a comparison between 1986 and the earlier years cannot be provided in real terms.

	1981		*1982*		*1983*		*1984*		*1985*		*1986*	
	Cash	*Real terms*	*Cash*	*Real terms*	*Cash*	*Real terms*	*Cash*	*Real terms*	*Cash*	*Real terms*	*Cash*	*Real terms*
(A) Total community expenditure	17,792·8	17,792·8	20,422·7	18,736·4	24,313·0	20,959·5	27,523·6	22,671·8	28,433·2	22,494·6	33,314·8	...
(B) Total (A) excluding rebates administration and institutions	15,491·1	15,491·1	17,503·2	16,058·0	21,472·6	18,510·9	25,060·5	20,642·9	27,076·6	21,421·4	30,046·7	...
(C) Agricultural costs guarantee, guidance and fisheries	11,584·8	11,584·8	13,070·4	11,991·2	16,592·7	14,304·1	19,088·2	15,723·4	20,754·8	16,419·6	22,009·3	...
(D) Agricultural (C) as a percentage of (B)	74·8	74·8	74·7	74·7	77·3	77·3	76·2	76·2	76·7	76·7	73·3	...

Notes:

1. Source of cash figures 1981 to 1984: Official Journal of the European Communities "Court of Auditors Annual Report on the 1984 financial year" (C326) and Statement on the Community budgets for the years 1984 and 1985 (Cmnds. 9174 and 9633).
2. Source of cash figures 1985 and 1986: General budgets of the European Communities for the financial years 1985 and 1986.
3. Real terms figures were derived using information on GDP deflators at market prices (source the Commission of European Communities publication "European Economy", Number 22). Cash figures deflated by GDP at constant 1981 prices.
4. All data in the tables concerns payment appropriations.

EC Budget

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why the Budget for 1986 which was approved by the Council of Ministers was prepared using an assumption of an exchange rate of one dollar=1·20 European currency units; who was responsible for making the assumption; if the assumption was discussed at the meeting of the Council; and what view Her Majesty's Government took of this assumption.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 March 1986]: The 1986 budget was drawn up by the Commission on the basis of assumptions about various factors affecting expenditure, including exchange rates. These were considered in the usual way by the Budget Council and taken into account in decisions on levels of expenditure.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Board and Lodging

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the Chief Adjudication Officer to inform him of the date of a tribunal of commissioners to hear all the outstanding appeals involving the elderly and disabled in receipt of board and lodging assistance.

Mr. Major: I understand that an oral hearing of a tribunal of commissioners has been arranged for Friday 11 April 1986 to consider a case relating to this issue.

Health Authorities

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to announce the appointment of chairmen of district health authorities.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 17 March.

Health Service Staff (Accommodation)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about residential accommodation for hospital staff.

Mr. Hayhoe: About 200 comments, mainly from health authorities, were received when the scrutiny report on staff accommodation was issued in 1984. Since the new national policy was announced last July, about 100 letters have been received, mainly on behalf of individuals or groups of staff who might be affected.

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if Coventry district health authority has given notice to any of its employees to quit accommodation owned by them.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to approach the chairman of the Coventry health authority.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what survey is taken by his Department of the availability of local medical practitioners before a hospital in their area is closed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Doctors and their representative organisations are always consulted when district health authorities propose closing a hospital. If the appropriate community health council does not oppose the closure, such cases are not referred to Ministers for a decision. Where the CHC does oppose the proposal and the case has to be referred to Ministers for a decision one of the items I would expect the consultation document to cover would be the level of medical cover available in the district in question.

Charitable Organisations

Sir Gerard Vaughan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money National Health Service authorities in England provided for charitable organisations providing health care in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of the domestic ratepayers in Coventry receive housing benefit.

Mr. Major: We estimate that the number of rate rebate recipients, based on the local authority's subsidy claims as a proportion of the number of domestic ratepayers in Coventry is about 40 per cent.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list *(a)* the number of claimants eligible for housing benefit and *(b)* the number and percentage claiming benefit for each year since the scheme's initiation; and if he will also present data on the number of dependants covered by these payments;

(2) if he will detail changes in the housing benefit scheme since its inception, together with planned future changes giving the numbers of claimants subject to changes to all or part of their entitlement, the average value of each of the changes and the net savings to public expenditure; and if he will express each of these changes to public expenditure as a percentage of the total cost of the scheme.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Elderly People (Residential Accommodation)

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the average weekly running costs per capita by region of local authority residential homes for the elderly, including all administrative overheads and loan charges.

Mr. Whitney: The information is not available in the form requested. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy publishes annual volumes "Personal Social Services Statistics"; the information given is derived from its latest (1984-85) information but will exclude administration and management costs.

Gross Expenditure per resident—week: Standard Regions 1984-85

	£
North	107·98
Yorkshire and Humberside	110·88
East Midlands	111·84
East Anglia	101·53
South East	125·28
South West	104·15
West Midlands	110·13
North West	110·95

Not all authorities provided information. Further details can be found in the CIPFA volume (columns 173-4 and 176), a copy of which is in the Library.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each of the last five years for which figures are available the number of persons in receipt of attendance allowance who were invited to make a fresh claim at age 16 years; if he will list in each case the number who consequently *(a)* retained the higher rate allowance, *(b)* were reduced from the higher to lower rate, *(c)* had the allowance at the higher rate withdrawn entirely, *(d)* retained the lower rate, *(e)* had the lower rate increased to the higher rate and *(f)* had the allowance at the lower rate withdrawn; and in respect of paragraphs *(b)*, *(c)*, *(d)* and *(f)*, if he will give the proportion of those concerned who requested a review of the decision and the proportion of reviews which were successful.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information requested is not available except at disproportionate cost. A research survey by York university of 293 16-year-olds, however, found that 230 had their allowance maintained at age 16 (78 per cent.). Of the remainder, six were increased from lower rate to higher rate, and the rest reduced either from higher to lower, or from higher or lower to no award. 26 claimants sought a review. Of these 12 lower rate became higher rate and three no awards became lower rate.

Asthma

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services for each year including 1986 since the introduction of the occupational asthma scheme *(a)* how many occupational asthma claims were made and *(b)* how many were successful.

Mr. Newton: The information is as follows. Figures for 1986 are not yet available.

Year	*Claims made*	*Claims successful*
1982	439	95
1983	439	183
1984	604	137
1985	538	166
	2,020	581

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, out of all the successful claims since the beginning of the occupational asthma scheme, to date, how many were in *(a)* the isocyanates group, *(b)* the platinum salts group, *(c)* the acid anhydride and amine hardening agents group, *(d)* the group involving fumes arising from the use of resin as a soldering flux, *(e)* the proteolytic enzyme group, *(f)* the animals or insects group and *(g)* the group associated with dusts arising from barley, oats, rye, wheat or maize or meal or flour made from such grain.

Mr. Newton: The following table shows the numbers of successful claims from occupational asthma in respect of each of the seven listed agents between 29 March 1982, when occupational asthma was prescribed, and 31 December 1985, the latest date for which information is available:

		Claims
(a)	Isocyanates	210
(b)	Platinum salts	25
(c)	Hardening agents	50
(d)	Soldering flux	97
(e)	Proteolytic enzymes	14
(f)	Animals Insects	26
(g)	Flour Grain	159
	Total	581

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, out of the total number of successful claims for occupational asthma since the introduction of the occupational asthma scheme, how many cases were awarded 15 per cent. disablement or below.

Mr. Newton: Of the 581 successful claims since the introduction of the occupational asthma scheme, 439 were assessed at 15 per cent. or below.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many countries within the EEC officially recognise occupational asthma as an industrial disease; which countries they are; and in what years they introduced their respective schemes.

Mr. Newton: Information derived from the International Labour Office and European Community reports indicates that the following countries provide benefits for occupational asthma. (In some cases the disease is not cited explicitly in the national legislation but the risk is covered).

Belgium
Denmark
France
Germany
Greece
Luxembourg
Netherlands
Portugal
Spain

In 1982 the United Kingdom recognised occupational asthma as an industrial disease.

We have no information on the dates when cover was introduced by other member States nor do we have any information on whether or not Ireland or Italy recognise occupational asthma as an industrial disease.

Road Traffic Fatalities

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the annual cost *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in England and Wales of road traffic fatalities; and if he will estimate what proportion of the cost is related to drunken driving.

Mr. Whitney: I understand that the hon. Member is referring to the cost to the National Health Service of treating road traffic fatalities. In 1983, the last year for

which the relevant hospital statistics are available, the cost of treating road accident fatalities (defined as patients dying within 30 days of admission to hospital or those dead on arrival) is estimated at £1·3 million for England. A comparable figure for the rest of the United Kingdom is not available. It is not possible to estimate the proportion of the cost to the National Health Service attributable to drunken driving.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will detail for the latest available date the number of *(a)* claimants and *(b)* dependants on supplementary benefit; and if this total could be broken down into the main claimant groups.

Mr. Major: The latest date for which this information is available is December 1983, and I refer the hon. Member to table 3.1 of the "Annual Statistical Enquiry, 1983", a copy of which is in the Library.

Unemployment-related Benefits

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list *(a)* the number of claimants of social security benefits and *(b)* the number of dependants in 1979 and at the latest available date; and if he will calculate the extent to which the increase in unemployment since 1979 correlates with the increase in the number of claimants and dependants.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each year since 1978-79 changes in the contribution rates for both employee and employer of class one national insurance contributions; and if he will state for each year the additional revenue raised by these charges from (i) employees and (ii) employers for each of these years.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Unemployed Persons (Benefits)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the cost of paying benefits to the unemployed and their dependants, including national insurance, supplementary benefit and housing benefit for each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Reform

7. **Mr. Rowe** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the levy to be raised by the London Residuary Body from London boroughs; and what assessment he has made of the effect on the size of the levy of the abolition of the Greater London council.

Mrs. Rumbold: On 25 February the London Residuary Body announced a levy of £48 million for 1986-87.

The residuary body's overall budget takes account of the balances that will be left by the GLC when it is abolished.

22. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from voluntary organisations in response to the announcement of transitional grants under the Local Government Act 1985.

Sir George Young: Four representations have been received from organisations which have not been accepted for funding under transitional grant, and two from organisations concerned about the allocations to particular local authorities.

56. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the number of redundancies arising from abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Tracey: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 13 January at columns *468-69*. I note that the chairman of the Staff Commission has recently expressed the view that

"it is impossible to give an accurate assessment of the likely level of redundancies until authorities have finished recruiting to fulfil their new responsibilities".

I agree with him.

58. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received since 1 March from voluntary organisations concerning their continued funding in the Greater London and metropolitan areas after 1 April.

Sir George Young: Since 1 March I have received 14 representations from voluntary groups expressing concern about their future funding after 1 April.

Local Authority Housing

8. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his policy towards housing in the public sector in the light of the Audit Commission's recent report entitled "Managing the Crisis in Council Housing", and, in particular, its reference to the relative amount spent by local authorities on their administrative costs, on the one hand, and on their housing management, on the other.

Mr. John Patten: I very much support the Audit Commission's call for improved housing management by local authorities, for example, by streamlining reletting procedures to reduce the time houses stand empty, more effective rent collection and arrears control, better services for the elderly, and, by partnership with the private sector. Less bureaucracy and a better service for tenants must be the goal—almost 100 authorities devote negligible effort to estate management. The benefits could be substantial. The commission estimates that rent arrears could be reduced by £100 million, administrative costs cut by £80 million to £100 million and over 20,000 empty dwellings made available for letting.

64. **Mr. Maples** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his policy towards the reduction in the number of empty dwellings in the light of the Audit Commission's conclusion, in its

recent report on council housing management, about the potential scope available to local authorities for streamlining their reletting procedures.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend has urged local authorities as a matter of the highest priority to reduce the number of empty dwellings by improving their property management. My Department's circular 12/85 sets out how to do this. The Audit Commission's conclusion that streamlined letting procedures could make over 20,000 extra dwellings available for letting underlines the need for urgent action.

47. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his policy towards the promotion of partnership between housing authorities and the private sector in the light of the Audit Commission's recent estimate of the amount of money which may be available from the private sector for this purpose.

Sir George Young: The Government agree with the Audit Commission on the need to attract private finance into public sector housing. Our urban housing renewal unit has been discussing with many local authorities the scope for joint ventures with private developers to tackle the problems of their run-down housing estates. A number of successful schemes have already taken place. The unit is also keen to attract institutional finance into run-down estates through private trust, such as the one which will shortly take over Thamesmead. The new powers in the Building Societies Bill will make it easier for societies to support such ventures.

Sporting Facilities

23. **Mr. John Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on the encouragement of the wider use of sporting facilities.

Mr. Tracey: My policy is to give every encouragement — with the Sports Council and other bodies like the Football Trust — to schemes designed to expand the community use of existing sport and recreation facilities. Such schemes represent obvious value-for-money to meet the continually growing demand for opportunities for sport. I believe that wider community use can be obtained of sporting facilities (for example in football) and of those in schools and colleges. I have active discussions of these possibilities with my colleagues in the Department of Education and Science, with the Sports Council, with the local authority associations and also as part of my continuing dialogue with the football authorities.

Housing Defects Act

24. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses have been purchased by local authorities under the Housing Defects Act since the legislation was passed.

Mr. John Patten: Local authorities in England have reported that some 1,300 dwellings were repurchased under the Act, up to 31 December 1985.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what factors are inhibiting the designation of Boswell houses in Birmingham under the Housing Defects Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The Building Research Establishment is currently investigating the condition of Boswell houses. I expect to reach a decision on the question of designation under the Act as soon as I am able to consider BRE's findings, and the other evidence available.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the extent to which reinstatement of the Boot houses in Birmingham is possible within the financial limits under the Housing Defects Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: PRC Homes Ltd. has not yet approved any repair methods for Boot houses and we have no information on the likely cost of repair. When this information becomes available, we will consider whether the expenditure limit for this property type is satisfactory.

Local Authority Services (Privatisation)

25. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of local authorities in privatising services.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The fact that so few local authorities have voluntarily subjected their services to competition is a matter of continuing disappointment to the Government. Ratepayers are being denied savings for no good reason whatever.

Housing Repairs

26. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses in the public sector he expects to be repaired in the current year.

Mr. John Patten: Though we do not make forecasts of this kind I expect local authorities to give increasing priority this year to the renovation of their own stock.

Rates

27. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest estimate of the average increase in domestic rates for 1986-87.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Members for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) and for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short).

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the average rate increase at ratepayer level, for authorities, county and districts, in each non-metropolitan county, metropolitan county and in the Greater London area in each year from 1975-76 to 1985-86, showing also the overall percentage change over this period.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The figures have been published annually by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in "Finance and General Statistics" (previously "Finance, General and Rating Statistics") since 1977-78.

Figures for 1975-76 and 1976-77 were published by DOE in "Rates and Rateable Values".

Copies of these publications are in the Library.

Housing Investment Programmes

Mr. Ottaway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the response from local authorities to the urban housing renewal units invitation to them to bid for additional housing investment programme resources for 1986-87, in order to implement schemes for the improvement of conditions on their run-down estates.

Sir George Young: I am delighted with the response to the urban housing renewal unit's invitation to targeted local authorities to bid for additional resources to support schemes which will revitalise their rundown estates. So far 35 authorities have made bids for schemes on 94 estates involving proposals for localised management, community refurbishment schemes and the attraction of private sector skills and resources. We have already given approval in principle to schemes in Calderdale, Coventry and Gateshead. Further approvals will follow shortly.

67. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what further representations he has received about 1986-87 housing investment programme allocations.

Sir George Young: Various representations about the 1986-87 housing investment programme allocations have been made during visits, at meetings, or in correspondence.

Drinking Water

29. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he proposes to take to ensure that the quality of drinking water will not be affected by the privatisation of water authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The legal basis of drinking water standards will be clarified and departures from those standards will as now be allowed in exceptional circumstances only with specific Government authorisation.

Water Authorities

30. **Mr. Rost** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he is making with his preparations for privatising the regional water authorities.

Mr. John Patten: My Department is continuing its preparations for legislation, which will be introduced at the earliest opportunity. Bids have been received from merchant banks for the work of advising the Government on flotation and an appointment will be announced shortly. I expect soon to issue consultation papers on protecting the water environment and a review of water and sewerage law.

Small Businesses

31. **Mr. Key** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will issue guidance on small firms and planning matters as promised in "Lifting the Burden".

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales will tomorrow publish a booklet, "Planning Permission for Small Businesses — A Step by Step Guide". The booklet provides a down-to-earth guide to the planning process, and will be distributed free of charge to those running—or proposing to set up—a small firm.

Land Banks

32. **Mr. Steen** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review his policy on the amount of land local authorities should hold in their land banks and the number of years for which land should be held.

Mr. Tracey: It is for local authorities to decide how much land to hold in their land banks and the number of years for which land should be held. Where land owned by local authorities is on the land register my right hon. Friend may direct the authority to dispose of its interest in the land where appropriate.

Basildon

3. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the recent visit to Basildon by the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten).

Mr. John Patten: I was glad to be able to see housing conditions at first hand with my hon. Friend, who has been briefing me over housing problems in Basildon. The council is doing some positive things and the standard of housing generally is higher than in many other places. I accept that there are problems and I hope that the council will co-operate with the private sector to the maximum possible extent in resolving them. I am considering the council's proposals to purchase land for more housing and will issue a decision as soon as possible.

Football Clubs (Family Involvement)

34. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what support, by way of grants or other means, the Government are giving to encourage family and community involvement with football clubs.

Mr. Tracey: In our continuing discussions with the football authorities, we are giving very active encouragement to strengthening family and community involvement with football clubs. This will help to encourage participation in sport, it represents effective marketing for football, and in the longer term it will help to remove the threat of violence. Many clubs now have family enclosures and links with the community. Grants are available for community schemes from local authorities, the Sports Council and the Football Trust.

The Sports Council has committed nearly £3 million to the football and the community scheme since 1978, in partnership first with the Football Grounds Improvement Trust and then with the Football Trust (whose contribution has exceeded £1 million). Some clubs also receive support under the Department of Employment's community programme, administered by the Manpower Services Commission; new projects are under consideration.

Football Matches (Hooliganism)

35. **Mr. Hayward** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps the Government are taking to seek to prevent hooligans travelling from the United Kingdom and causing trouble at football matches abroad; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: For matches in Europe we have the European convention, agreed last year following this Government's initiative. Specifically for the Mexico World Cup we are preparing appropriate action with the football authorities; I expect to make an announcement about this soon.

53. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the effectiveness of Government measures to combat football hooliganism.

Mr. Tracey: It appears that the package of measures developed by the Government with the football authorities has brought good results. All reports indicate a better atmosphere at Football League matches so far this season. There have been no major incidents inside grounds. The latest police figures show that arrests inside grounds, and ejections from grounds, are down by 30·5 per cent. in Division 1 and by 22 per cent. in Division 2 compared with the same period last season. No one can be complacent. But I pay tribute to the efforts by the clubs and police forces so far; and to the Football Trust which has provided funds for the important installation of closed circuit television at grounds. I understand that the alcohol restrictions imposed by the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1985 have also helped the police considerably. The football hooliganism problems are long-standing and require continued vigilance. We will continue to review progress and measures with the football authorities.

Nature Conservancy Council

36. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial resources have been available to the Nature Conservancy Council in each year since 1981; and what is their budget for 1986-87.

Mr. Waldegrave: The grant-in-aid to the Nature Conservancy Council was as follows:

	£ million
1981-82	10·2
1982-83	11·5
1983-84	12·8
1984-85	18·1
1985-86	22·7

The provision for 1986-87 is £32·1 million subject to the approval of Parliament.

Sheltered Housing

37. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to make any form of sheltered housing available for purchase by tenants; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Sheltered accommodation for the elderly and the disabled is excluded from the right to buy, but it is open to local authorities and other public sector landlords to sell such accommodation on a voluntary basis. Whether to do so, and if so whether to offer a discount, are matters for the landlord to decide in the light of local circumstances.

Construction Industry

38. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals for increasing the amount of work available to the construction industry.

Sir George Young: Yes, through the continuation of our economic policies. By controlling inflation and public spending we are succeeding in creating the right climate for investment and growth. In 1985, construction output was over £22 billion (at constant 1980 prices)—11 per cent. up in real terms on the 1981 level. Output for the private sector has increased by over 20 per cent. in real terms during that period.

Greater London Council (Grants)

39. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total of grants made by the Greater London council in 1985-86 to date which have required his prior approval.

Mr. Tracey: To date we have received 314 applications from the GLC for consent to grants to various bodies. Of these, 293 required consent under section 7 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 as involving section 137 expenditure; 207, totalling £19,759,391, have received section 7 consent; 36, totalling £9,198,041, have been refused.

Of the total of 314 applications, 21 required consent under section 92 of the Local Government Act 1985 as imposing a liability on successor authorities. All of these, totalling £968,246, have been refused.

In addition, 88 applications, totalling £19,213,099, have been made in respect of proposals for financial assistance to various London boroughs. Consent has been given to 59 of these, totalling £10,549,470; 5, totalling £77,345, have been refused. My right hon. Friend has also decided that he would not wish to direct the London Residuary Body to recover 106 payments, totalling £52,971,836, which were made by the GLC to the London boroughs in 1985-86 without consent; the GLC has been asked to supply more information about a further 10 payments, totalling £178,691, made in 1985-86 without consent.

Grant Recycling

40. **Mr. Evans** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what responses he has received from the local authority associations to his letter of 4 March regarding grant recycling in 1986-87.

41. **Mr. Stott** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what responses he has received from the local authority associations to his letter of 4 March regarding grant recycling in 1986-87.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have received letters from the Association of County Councils welcoming my announcement, and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities seeking clarification of the guarantee. Representations were also made at the meeting of the Consultative Council for Local Government Finance on 12 March.

48. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the amount of rate support grant that will be recycled to the shire counties in the financial year 1986-87.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have received a range of representations both from the local authority associations and individual authorities.

59. **Mr. Colin Shepherd** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the effect upon individual councils of his decision to recycle grant money to local authorities in receipt of grant at budgeted expenditure.

Mr. Waldegrave: This is a matter for individual local authorities but I hope they will have taken advantage of my announcement to reduce the burden on their ratepayers.

District Auditors

42. **Mr. Forth** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce legislation to strengthen the powers of district auditors in relation to the responsibilities and duties of local councillors in connection with the management of local government finance; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have no such plans.

Local Government Finance

43. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of local government current spending will be met by central Government grants in 1985-86.

Mrs. Rumbold: On the basis of etimates in the Rate support Grant Supplementary Report (England) No. 2 1985-86, the percentage of local authority relevant expenditure supported by aggregate Exchequer grant is 46·6 per cent.

63. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has so far received from members of the public about the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government".

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts).

Water Supplies (Nitrate Pollution)

44. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in curbing nitrate pollution of public water supplies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave my hon. Friend on 14 January at column *545*.

Council House Sales

45. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the use local authorities are making of partnerships with the private sector to provide their tenants with the opportunity to buy low-cost homes.

Sir George Young: Local authorities have reported the construction of more than 15,000 homes for sale by private builders under licence on local authority land since 1981. In addition, over the same period local authorities sold more than 2,000 hectares of housing land to private developers, sufficient for some 48,000 homes. More than half of local authorities in England and Wales have carried out at least one of these forms of partnership scheme with the private sector to provide new homes for sale, as part of our low-cost home ownership initiatives. A sample survey in 1984 suggested that more than half the purchasers of new partnership scheme homes were actual or potential local authority tenants.

Some local authorities have also co-operated with private developers to secure the improvement and sale of existing public dwellings. The provisions of the Housing and Planning Bill will make such sales easier.

Local Authorities (Services)

46. **Mr. Chris Smith** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the impact on services provided by the local authorities in question in the rate limitation orders for 1986-87.

Mr. Waldegrave: A number of authorities drew my attention in their representations to the impact which they claimed rate capping would have on their services. Similar claims made about rate capping in 1985-86 did not in the event prove justified.

School Sports Facilities

49. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress towards dual use of school sports facilities.

Mr. Tracey: Community or dual use of school sports facilities is one aspect of my overall policy to encourage the wider use of existing facilities in order to help meet the increasing demand for sport and recreation opportunities. Such developments represent obvious value for money. There is already considerable dual use. It is supported by many local education authorities but not universally and I am discussing with my colleagues at the Department of Education and Science how we might achieve further progress of benefit both to schools and to the community. Special funds are available to assist schemes from the Sports Council and the Football Trust.

Sport and Recreation

50. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's policy towards the provision of sport and recreation opportunities for communities in inner cities and deprived areas.

Mr. Tracey: The Government believe that sport and recreation can play an important part in alleviating social deprivation in the inner cities and other areas of need. We have encouraged, and fully support, the Sports Council's policies to provide a wide range of opportunities for communities in these areas. In 1985-86 the council's expenditure on schemes in inner cities and areas of special need accounted for 20 per cent. of its total budget. This expenditure will rise next year as a result of the substantial increase in the council's grant in aid from £30·6 million to £37 million.

The Government's urban programme and derelict land grant schemes are further important sources of support for a wide range of sport and recreation projects in inner cities and other urban areas. The annual value of this support is currently about £35 million.

60. **Mr. Dickens** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards the provision of sport and recreation facilities for the community.

Mr. Tracey: Communities' demand for sport and recreation opportunities continues to grow and I am concerned that, within public expenditure constraints, this should be met. Participating in sport has obvious benefits, in health and well-being and in community spirit (especially in deprived areas). Sport plays an important part in the lives of people of all ages. To meet the need there is a great deal of annual public investment in new facilities and opportunities — currently about £700 million by local authorities, £35 million under the urban programme and large sums under the programmes of various Government Departments. In particular, this Government have increased substantially the grant to the Sports Council, from £14 million in 1979 to £37 million next year. Through public and private investment, and much voluntary effort, the country's stock of facilities has improved substantially in recent years. This growth will continue. At the same time, I look for an expansion in the use of existing facilities, in schools, colleges, industry and in sports like football.

Assured Tenancies Scheme

51. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will take steps to extend the assured tenancies scheme to cover newly-improved dwellings; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: In order to provide greater scope for responsible landlords to invest in rented accommodation, my hon. Friend yesterday tabled amendments to the Housing and Planning Bill to extend the assured tenancy scheme.

House Building

52. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many housing starts have been made in England and Wales so far in 1985-86.

Sir George Young: In the first 10 months of 1985-86, it is provisionally estimated that there were 151,000 starts in England and Wales.

Housing Authorities (Expenditure)

54. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the number of housing authorities which are not making full use of their spending powers in the current year.

Sir George Young: Outturn figures for the current year are not yet available. In 1984-85, 16 local authorities reported prescribed expenditure on housing which was less than the amount of their housing investment programme allocation; and 128 reported prescribed expenditure which was less than the combined spending power available to them from their housing investment programme allocation and the prescribed proportion of the capital receipts generated from housing during that year. It is not known how many other authorities had prescribed expenditure which was less than the combined spending power available to them from these sources and from the unspent portion of receipts in earlier years.

Civil Parishes

55. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether it is his policy to reduce the numbers of civil parishes in rural areas.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. But I believe civil parishes which perform no function and do not have meetings cannot be justified as units of local government.

Green Belt

57. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has given any fresh guidance to local authorities on development within the green belt.

Mr. Tracey: Advice to local authorities on development within the green belt is set out in Department of the Environment circular 14/84. That circular confirms guidance on development within the green belt which was first issued in 1955. We have made it abundantly clear that we stand by this policy.

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Environment wht representations he has received concerning building on green belt land.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I receive many representations. Most of them are against development in the green belt.

Rate Support Grant (Sunderland)

61. **Mr. Clay** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount of rate support grant was paid to the borough of Sunderland for each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is as follows:

	£ million
1981-82	63·787
1982-83	64·724
1983-84	65·252
1984-85	65·556
1985-86	59·499

The amounts for 1981-82 and 1982-83 are final entitlements. Figures for later years are latest estimates of entitlements.

Voluntary Organisations

62. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will meet representatives of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities to discuss the future funding of voluntary organisations after 1 April.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend has received no request from the AMA for a meeting.

Housing Stock

65. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the state of the housing stock in northern England.

Sir George Young: The 1981 English house condition survey showed that for northern England (the north-west, northern and Yorkshire and Humberside regions) 7·8 per cent. of dwellings were unfit, 4·9 per cent. lacked at least one basic amenity and 5·7 per cent. were in serious disrepair*. More up-to-date information will be available from the 1986 survey to be started this autumn.

* Costing over £7,000.

Water Industry (Privatisation)

66. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received concerning the environmental consequences of privatising the water industry.

Mr. John Patten: Three responses from environmental bodies were received to the discussion paper which was issued last year about water privatisation. A number of responses to the White Paper "Privatisation of the Water Authorities in England and Wales" (Cmnd. 9734) have raised environmental subjects. A consultation paper on environmental protection following privatisation will be issued shortly.

Rented Accommodation

68. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received on the supply of homes to rent.

Sir George Young: We continue to receive various representations on this subject. We want to encourage the supply of homes to rent in the private sector, though no proposals for any major reform of the Rent Act are likely to be brought forward during the lifetime of this Parliament. A number of representations have stressed how more homes might be provided under the assured tenancy scheme. In response to these representations my hon. Friend has tabled amendments to the Housing and Planning Bill to extend the assured tenancy scheme to improved property.

Royal Parks

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment in what circumstances private motor vehicles are permitted to pass through Kensington gardens and other royal parks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Private motor vehicles are permitted to pass through the royal parks on those parks roads which are open to the public. There are such parks roads in Hyde park, St. James's, Green, Regent's, Greenwich, Richmond and Bushy park. There are no parks roads in Kensington gardens.

Apart from official journeys made by parks personnel, private vehicles are not allowed to pass through, unless they have specific and necessary business in the park. These could include building and maintenance contractors, delivery and service vehicles, catering and other parks concessionaries employees. The disabled are also permitted vehicle access in certain circumstances.

Woodlands

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, having regard to the failure of the Nature Conservancy Council to recommend for exemption from capital transfer tax ancient or semi-natural broadleaved woodlands of less than two hectares, what proposals his Department has to ensure the protection of such of those small woodlands that are important to the conservation of wildlife on the wider countryside.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to the Government statement made on 24 July 1985 setting out the new policy for broadleaved woodlands, and the guidelines for management of these woodlands issued by the Forestry Commission last September after consultation with the Countryside Commission, Nature Conservancy Council and other bodies.

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the extent and purpose of the Nature Conservancy Council's survey of private woodlands; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The NCC's woodlands survey is being carried out in order to compile a register of ancient woodlands to include all probable ancient semi-natural woodlands, other woodlands, such as plantations, on ancient woodland sites, and some recent semi-natural woods which are known or believed to be important sites for nature conservation. Woodlands less than 2 hectares in size are excluded. The purpose of the register is to identify those areas where nature conservation values are high and appropriate management is required to maintain those values.

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will inquire of the Nature conservancy council on what basis it decided that ancient or semi-natural broadleaved woodlands of less than two hectares should not be recommended for exemption from capital transfer tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The nature of advice given by the Nature Conservancy Council to the Inland Revenue in respect of claims for exemption from capital transfer tax or relief from capital gains tax is a matter for the council itself. Woodlands within sites of special scientific interest or national nature reserves would normally qualify regardless of their size, but it would be impracticable to survey all ancient or semi-natural broadleaved woodland of less than 2 hectares throughout Greater Britain for this purpose.

General Council for Voluntary Service

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received from the general secretary of the Greater Council for Voluntary Service; what reply he is sending; if there is any action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The general secretary of the Greater Manchester Council for Voluntary Service has written an open letter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about funding of voluntary bodies after abolition. My noble Friend the Minister of State will be replying shortly, and I will place a copy of the correspondence in the Library.

Hotel Development (Waterloo)

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning applications for hotel development in the Waterloo area bounded by Lambeth road, Blackfriars road and the River Thames he has called in for decision in each of the past six years.

Mr. Tracey: None.

Sir John Wells asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what provision he proposes to make in the legislation implementing the proposals contained in the White Paper on privatisation of the water authorities,

Cmnd. 9734, to ensure the preservation of the existing rights of leisure and navigation interests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Privatisation is not expected to affect the rights and duties of water authorities relating to navigation or recreation. These rights and duties will pass to water services public limited companies. The companies' operating licences will provide for the existing range and level of facilities to be maintained, and they will be able to develop and expand in these areas if they wish. The licences will also provide for the Director General of Water Services to determine the size of the environmental services charge which helps to pay for recreation and navigation functions.

Inner Cities

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the extra funding available to the inner cities he estimates will be spent on the housing stock.

Sir George Young: It is for local authorities to determine the proportion of their resources spent on the housing stock, and the extent to which they take advantage of additional resources available through my Department's urban housing renewal unit and other programmes, including urban development grant and derelict land grant. The Government have increased the weightings for inner city authorities within the generalised needs index which is used to distribute housing capital resources.

Urban Development Grant

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will give a breakdown by category of projects approved for urban development grant and the benefits these projects will yield.

Mr. John Patten: 179 offers of urban development grant have been accepted or are on the table. Details of the estimated expenditure and benefits of these projects are in the following table.

Type of scheme	*Number of projects*	*Grant*	*Private investment*	*Gearing ratio*	*Number of jobs created or retained*	*Number of houses and flats*	*Land reused (Acres)*
		£ million	*£ million*				
Industrial							
Factories/workshops/ warehouses	49	19·4	73·6	1:3·8	7,328	15	188
Business expansion projects	20	6·9	26·5	1:3·8	2,835	0	43
Commercial							
Retail	25	19·4	109·6	1:5·6	4,242	12	61
Office	19	4·8	22·3	1:4·6	1,968	5	12
Tourism and recreation	16	15·2	58·5	1:3·8	2,888	0	38
Housing							
New build	31	11·4	42·5	1:3·7	97	2,462	218
Refurbishment/conversion	19	8·3	21·1	1:2·5	139	1,205	54
All UDG schemes	179	85·4	354·1	1:4·1	19,497	3,699	614

Notes:
(a) Tourism and recreation includes also hotels and trade centres.
(b) The grant figures include £2·5 million of public expenditure other than UDG.
(c) Mixed-use schemes are included in the predominant type.

Airport, Royal Docks

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to call in the detailed planning application for the terminal buildings and runway of the proposed short take off and landing airport in the royal docks; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: No. The details of the proposal, the outline of which has already been approved, are for the local planning authority, in this case the LDDC.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied that the report of the noise consultants appointed by the London Dockland Development Corporation in respect of the planning application for terminal buildings and runway for the proposed short take off and landing airport in the royal docks demonstrates that the application conforms to the terms of the relevant agreement under section 52 of the Town and Country Planning Act; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I understand that the application conforms with the section 52 agreement. The agreement is entirely a matter between the LDDC, the Port of London Authority, the London borough of Newham and the developers. The report of the noise consultant was commissioned by the LDDC to identify appropriate noise insulation measures and the scale of installation of sound barriers.

Reservoirs

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in implementing the Reservoirs Act 1975.

Mr. John Patten: The Reservoirs Act is being implemented in stages.

Last April in all areas in England, Scotland and Wales (Except Greater London and the metropolitan areas) responsibility for enforcement of the Act was placed on county and regional and islands councils which primarily involved them in setting up registers of reservoirs and

taking action in the event of an emergency. Non-compliance with the Act's safety provisions became a criminal offence.

This April, the same responsibilities are being placed on the London borough and metropolitan district councils. Elsewhere the remaining provisions of the Act will come into effect. These largely replicate the requirements of the existing Reservoirs (Safety Provisions) Act 1930 dealing with the regular inspection of reservoirs and the supervision of their design and construction by qualified engineers appointed by the Secretary of State on the advice of the institution of Civil Engineers. There are two important new provisions: owners must appoint a named supervising engineer to keep the reservoir under continual supervision between inspections; and precautions must be taken if a reservoir is abandoned. These remaining provisions will come into force in Greater London and the metropolitan areas in April 1987.

"Paying for Local Government"

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will extend the consultation period in respect of the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government."

Mr. Waldegrave: Further to my answer of 19 February at column *210*, to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) my right hon. Friend has now told the local authority associations, in response to representations they had made, that we will be prepared to consider responses received by 31 October. It would nevertheless still be helpful if interested parties were to send us their views by the previously announced date of 1 October.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 20 March 1986

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Sexual Offences (Children)

Mr. Dickens asked the Attorney-General if he will initiate a prosecution for sexual offences involving children against a person whose name has been supplied to his office.

The Attorney-General: Certain papers were received yesterday by the Director of Public Prosecutions, who is considering them.

SCOTLAND

Glasgow Airport

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if there are any plans to seek to increase the level of international traffic at Glasgow airport;

(2) if there are any plans to seek to increase air traffic at Glasgow airport.

Mr. Ancram: It is up to the airlines to operate services where they find it commercially attractive to do so, subject to the granting of route licences.

Family Law (Scotland) Act

Dame Judith Hart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to bring into operation the provisions of the Family Law (Scotland) Act.

Mr. Rifkind: I intend to bring the Family Law (Scotland) Act 1985 into operation as soon as possible. Since, however, a number of the provisions of the Act relate to court procedures, no specific commencement date can be defined until new or amended procedural rules have been made by the Court of Session on the recommendation of the Rules Councils for the Court of Session and the sheriff court.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his reply of 12 March, *Official Report*, column *487*, to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill, he will list those projects in the Glasgow area which the Scottish Development Agency is likely to defer to future years.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I understand that, of those physical works projects which the agency had proposed to carry out in Glasgow in 1986-87, the following are likely to be deferred to future years:

Glasgow University landscaping
Newton Park
Birnhouse Road
Cumberland Street
Barrowfield
Clyde Walkway (Victoria to Albert Bridges)
Blackhill Phase 6
Garscube
Newton Halfway Bing
Balmore Railway Cutting
Leverndale
Central Hotel
Parkhead Railway
Hogarth Park
Foresthall Hospital
Carntyne Railway Bridge

Youth Training

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is considering the representations made by the chairman of Glasgow area manpower board on the problems facing the voluntary sector in funding the two-year youth training schemes; and if he will consider meeting the board on this matter.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. and learned Friend and I have already written in considerable detail in response to the several particular and general representations which have been made to us on this matter. Also, the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission sent a full reply to the chairman of the Glasgow area manpower board on 10 March in response to his letter of 18 February. There is nothing which I can usefully add to what has already been said. I am assured that, despite the regrettable loss of some YTS places in the voluntary sector, in Scotland the great majority of managing agents will continue to participate, thus ensuring the necessary total number of places and an adequate balance of provision. In the circumstances no useful purpose would be served by a meeting with the board.

TRANSPORT

Vehicle Age Identification System

Mr. Wood asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans there are to change the vehicle age identification system.

Mr. Ridley: The current vehicle age identification system has created difficulties for some parts of the motor industry because of the peak in sales produced when the age letter changes in August. I have considered the views of the main motor trade organisations and I am aware that there are different opinions about what can be done to improve the situation. However, changing the month to October would help some large vehicle manufacturers and would also enable the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre to make some savings and improvements in service. The change could not be made in 1986 because manufacturers' production plans have already been settled, but I propose to move the change month to October in 1987.

Litter Bins (Mountford Bridge)

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, in the light of experience, following the trial removal of litter bins from the lay-by at Mountford bridge, Shrewsbury, he will now implement the request of Mountford parish council to his Department to re-instate these bins.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am not aware of any evidence which would warrant this, but we will continue to monitor the situation.

Air Services (London-Singapore)

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he makes of the scope for further increases in capacity on the London-Singapore route; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am satisfied that the capacity already provided by British Airways and Singapore Airlines between the United Kingdom and Singapore is fully adequate to meet the demand for travel between the two countries.

Departmental Suppliers (Payment)

Mr. Ottaway asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average time it takes his Department to pay suppliers of goods and services to his Department.

Mr. Ridley: The average time taken within the Department's accounts branch from receipt of an authorised instruction to payment is five working days. Times taken from receipt of invoice vary with the type of purchase and circumstances but in the case of civil engineering and related requirements the conditons of contract require payment within one month of receipt and certification of the contractor's statement.

M25 (Defects)

Mr. George Gardiner asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has yet received the report from W. S. Atkins and Partners, consulting engineers on the Reigate-Leatherhead section of the M25, determining where responsibility for defects in the construction of the section lies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The contractual position was explained in the reply given on 11 November, at column 79. I have not yet received the consulting engineer's decision on where responsibility lies.

Okehampton Bypass

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Transport what account he took, in preparing his answer of 10 March, *Official Report*, column *365*, regarding the reimbursement by Her Majesty's Government of the costs incurred by petitioners against the Okehampton bypass special procedure order of the circumstances in which, and the extent to which, the joint committee had power to award costs at that time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport was aware of the powers of the Joint Committee to award costs when he gave his answer of 10 March. I can add nothing to that answer.

East London Road Assessment Study

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the consultant's report on the east London road assessment study will be published.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I expect to publish the report later this year.

Severn Crossing

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to publish any interim reports on the study for a second Severn crossing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: An interim report was published in April 1985. The various threads of the study are at different stages of advancement, and no interim report could contain final proposals. A number of route options that have been identified are expected to be discarded in the light of further work. In order to avoid causing any unnecessary concern and uncertainty to parties who might not in the end be affected, I have decided, in consultation with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, not to publish any further interim reports. I can assure my hon. Friend that the final report, which is still expected for the summer of this year, will be published.

Meteorological Services

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of the cost of the meteorological services for the civil aviation industry are met by British civil aviation carriers and foreign carriers, respectively.

Mr. Michael Spicer [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 March 1986]: On the basis of statistics produced by Eurocontrol and a sample of traffic in the Shanwick oceanic control area, about 42 per cent. of the costs of meteorological services supplied to civil aviation are recovered from operators of British registered aircraft and about 58 per cent. from foreign operators.

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Transport what percentages of the charges for meteorological services for the civil aviation industry are borne by private aviation in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Spicer [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 March 1986]: A figure for the proportion of meteorological charges borne by private aviation in the United Kingdom is not readily available and cannot be calculated except at disproportionate cost.

The Civil Aviation Authority, however, considers it to be negligible.

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement as to the cost per civil aircraft per annum for meteorological services in the United Kingdom; and what information he has as to how this compares with the costs borne by European carriers in France, Germany and Italy.

Mr. Michael Spicer [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 March 1986]: No information is available which would allow a comparison between the annual cost per civil aircraft of meteorological services in the United Kingdom and other major European countries. The charge for meteorological services is, however, about 12 per cent. of the total costs for air navigation services recovered from users in the United Kingdom, France and West Germany. No comparative figure is available for Italy.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Additives

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider removing bleach from the list of permitted additives in white bread.

Mrs. Fenner: We have no plans to remove bleaching agents from the list of permitted additives in white bread.

None of the reports produced by the independent expert committees in recent years have recommended that flour

bleaching agents should be removed from the list of permitted additives in white bread. The Bread and Flour Regulations 1984 which come into force on 1 July 1986 therefore continue the approval for the two flour bleaching agents permitted in white bread; the maximum quantity for benzoyl peroxide is also maintained, but a maximum quantity for chlorine dioxide is now to be introduced.

Agricultural Improvement Scheme

Sir Richard Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much money by way of grant has been paid out in the last convenient 12-month period for any of the 12 purposes of improving the environment or using alternative sources of energy under the agricultural improvement scheme; and how much money by way of grant in the same 12-month period has been paid out for any other purpose under the agriculture and horticulture grants scheme and other grant-aided schemes.

Mrs. Fenner: The agricultural improvement scheme has only been in operation since 1 October 1985. A detailed breakdown of expenditure under it is not yet available.

Departmental Suppliers

Mr. Ottaway asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the average time it takes his Department to pay suppliers of goods and services to his Department.

Mr. Jopling: The Ministry has about 150 centres which can authorise payments to suppliers of goods and services, and it would be a major exercise to calculate the average time taken to make payments. It is a standing instruction, that invoices should be processed promptly, and cheques are normally dispatched one or two working days after authorisation.

Potatoes

Mr. Roger King asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has determined the market support prices for potatoes to apply in Great Britain and in Northern Ireland for the 1986-87 crop year beginning on 1 July.

Mr. Gummer: Following consultations with the farmers unions we have decided to authorise the Potato Marketing Board to enter into pre-season contracts with producers to purchase up to 365,000 tonnes of potatoes over the months November 1986 to May 1987 at a scale of prices not to exceed an average of £53 per tonne. We have also agreed that the board can intervene directly on the market throughout the season where this will ensure support more cheaply than purchases under contract, provided that the total intervention does not exceed 500,000 tonnes. The target area for potato plantings in Great Britain, another important factor in market stability, was fixed last July at 158,000 hectares.

The maximum target price for Northern Ireland for the 1986-87 season will be £46 per tonne. The target area for Northern Ireland plantings is 12,750 hectares and the ceiling for any support operations is 60,000 tonnes.

I believe that these arrangements are sufficient to provide a reasonable level of fall-back support in the event of surplus production arising in 1986-87. We have, however, approved increases in PMB direct intervention trigger prices for the period April to June inclusive to bring them into a more realistic relationship with the board's contract prices. Producers themselves can, of course, make a positive contribution to market equilibrium by avoiding over-planting and I hope that they will do so.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Authority Finance

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environement if he will publish the total of local authority expenditure *(a)* gross and *(b)* net on (i) education, (ii) housing, (iii) environmental services, (iv) law, order and protective services, (v) roads and transport, (vi) social services and (vii) other in each year from 1979-80 to 1985-86 or the most recent available year, showing total expenditure, current expenditure and capital expenditure separately.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information is published in "Local Government Financial Statistics England and Wales" for the years 1979-80 to 1982-83 inclusive. (Copies of which are available in the Library.) 1983-84 information will be published shortly and information for 1984-85 is expected to be published in summer 1986. Information for 1985-86 is available on a net expenditure basis only from local authorities's budgets.

Mr. Powley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to vary local authorities' spending capacity under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has had a number of representations from local authority associations, individual authorities and other concerned bodies for an increase in section 137 limits. The Government consider, however, that it would not be appropriate to increase the 2p limit currently applying before the Widdicombe inquiry reports. The inquiry has been asked specifically to clarify the limits and conditions governing discretionary spending by local authorities, including section 137 spending.

The Government do, however, accept that some local authorities would, unless action was taken, face a reduction in their section 137 spending capacity for 1986-87 as an indirect consequence of the rate support grant settlement for that year. For this reason my right hon. Friend will shortly be consulting local government about proposals to ensure that section 137 limits for 1986-87 are maintained at the level applying in 1985-86. This will help many of the hardest pressed authorities, including many in metropolitan areas.

Water Authorities (Effluent Sampling)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what controls he currently exercises over the effluent sampling procedures of the water authorities; and whether he will give details of the sampling frequencies adopted by each authority for *(a)* their own discharges and *(b)* other discharges for each year since 1980-81.

Mr. John Patten: Since the implementation of section 34, part II of the Control of Pollution Act in January 1985, it has been a condition of consents granted to water

authorities by my right hon. Friend in respect of discharges from sewage treatment works that effluents are sampled in accordance with approved programmes. Sampling frequencies are specified within each authority's programme and they vary considerably according to the size of the works and the nature of the receiving waters. Details of samples actually taken are recorded on registers maintained by each authority and which are open for public inspection. Arrangements for sampling discharges made by bodies other than water authorities are matters for the individual authorities to decide.

Building Regulations

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to amend the building regulations to improve energy efficiency.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) on 16 December 1985 to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller), at column 13.

Local Authorities (Tenders)

Mr. Dover asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to prevent local authorities from inserting irrelevant provisions in tender invitations or contracts.

Mrs. Rumbold: An authority which abuses the contractual process in this way risks successful challenge in the courts. Consideration will be given to strengthening the existing law if it can be demonstrated that fresh legislation would indeed have that effect.

North Southwark Plan

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why, as indicated in the letter accompanying the call-in letter, the London borough of Southwark was not notified of the conflict between the north Southwark plan and circulars 22/80, 15/84 and 22/84 during the statutory preparation stages of the north Southwark plan.

Mr. Tracey: The London borough of Southwark should be well aware of policies contained in Government circulars. The general issues of conflict were raised in objections to the plan and aired at the public inquiry without the need for intervention by the Department.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why his Department did not give evidence indicating its concern about the conflict between the north Southwark plan and circulars 22/80, 15/84 and 22/84 at the north Southwark plan public inquiry.

Mr. Tracey: For the reasons given in answer to the earlier question the Secretary of State decided not to make formal objection and give evidence at a public inquiry.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he exercised his powers to call in the north Southwark plan under section 14(3) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 specifically on 28 January.

Mr. Tracey: It was believed that Southwark was to hold a meeting on 29 January when the position of the plan might be considered. To remove any uncertainty my right hon. Friend called in the plan prior to that meeting.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will allow the London borough of Southwark to adopt its statutory land use plan for north Southwark.

Mr. Tracey: No. My right hon. Friend is currently considering the plan following call-in on 29 January. It is hoped to issue a decision shortly.

Public Inquiries

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review his Department's policy relating to financial aid to local authorities and other objectors at public inquiries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: It remains my view that, except in the very special circumstances of an error by the Department which results in unnecessary expenditure by a party, all parties at public inquiries should meet their own costs.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration was given by the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive to seismic factors in choosing Bradwell as one of the four potential sites for the disposal of radioactive nuclear waste which he announced in his statement of 25 February.

Mr. Waldegrave: In selecting Bradwell, NIREX was aware of the area's seismic history. The proposed site investigations will establish whether Bradwell would be geologically suitable for development as a disposal facility.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether the criteria used by the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive in identifying the four potential sites for the disposal of radioactive nuclear waste were approved by him; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will publish the criteria used by the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive to select the four potential sites for the disposal of radioactive nuclear waste which he announced in his statement of 25 February.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government have the responsibility to determine the policy for the management of radioactive waste management and the national strategy for its implementation. Against that background we have indicated to NIREX the broad criteria we would want a site to satisfy. These are set out in a booklet published by my Department and others entitled "Disposal Facilities on Land for Low and Intermediate-Level Radioactive Wastes: Principles for the Protection of the Human Environment". Copies are available in the Library.

Responsibility for the selection of individual sites rests with NIREX. I understand that it has recently sent the hon. Member a copy of its brochure explaining the procedures it followed in making its choice.

Palace of Westminster

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what recent representations he has

received about the incidence of build-up of static electricity in the Palace of Westminster; and what action he has taken in consequence;

(2) what has been the cost of *(a)* gas, *(b)* electricity, *(c)* oil and *(d)* other fuels for the Palace of Westminster in each of the last five years.

Sir George Young: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Waste Disposal, Warrington

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what grounds he took into account when reaching his decision to allow an application by Manchester Ship Canal Company to tip waste on land at Moore, Warrington, to be decided by Cheshire county council; what consideration was given to any potential conflict of interest in respect of Cheshire county council; what weight was given to the views of Warrington borough council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend took full account of all the grounds raised in representations made to him, including those of Warrington borough council, which encompassed the argument that there was a potential conflict of interest in respect of Cheshire county council.

Grant-related Expenditure

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to make available his Department's publication "Grant Related Expenditure 1986-87".

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend has today placed copies of this document in the Library of the House. Copies have also been sent to every local authority in England and to the local authority associations.

ENERGY

Radioactive Material (Illegal Removal)

Mr. Bill Walker asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he is satisfied with the monitoring equipment available to detect illegal removal of radioactive material from nuclear industrial and processing plants and from nuclear material storage depots.

Mr. Goodlad: I am aware of no problems with the equipment.

Sellafield (Radiation)

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) at what time the escape of radiation at Sellafield on 5 February commenced; at what time the escape was discovered; at what time actions were taken to halt the escape; and at what time the escape was stopped;

(2) if he will present a detailed list of the precise chemical and radiochemical composition of the matter which escaped from Sellafield on 5 February;

(3) if he can provide an estimate of the temperature and pressure of the liquid within the pipe, pump or other equipment, which resulted in the escape of the gases, mists and matter during the release which occurred at Sellafield on 5 February;

(4) if he will provide full information on the extent and severity of contamination of the building at Sellafield where a radiation escape occurred on 5 February;

(5) with reference to the radiation leak at Sellafield on 5 February, at what time evacuation was commenced; at what time evacuation was completed; how many workers were in the building at the time of the incident; how many workers remained in the building; what the function and location of the remaining workers was; how many workers were exposed to contamination; to what degree; and if he will make a statement;

(6) if he will provide further and detailed information on the maximum individual effective dose equivalent commitment, in terms of total body dose from sources giving external exposure and estimated internal exposure from any ingested or inhaled sources of radioactivity, in milli Sieverts, of any worker as a result of the incident on 5 February, and the collective effective dose equivalent commitment to the workers, in man milli Sieverts; and if he will make a statement;

(7) if he will detail the methods to be employed in the clean up of the contaminated area of Sellafield affected by the leak of 5 February; if he will estimate the length of time required to carry out the decontamination processes; if he will estimate the cost of clean up operations; and if he will make a statement;

(8) at what time the reprocessing line at Sellafield was closed down; what is the estimated cost that will be incurred due to cessation of operations following the radioactive leak at Sellafield on 5 February; and if he will make a statement;

(9) what was the source material from which the plutonium nitrate which escaped at Sellafield on 5 February was extracted.

Mr. Goodlad: Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate is carrying out an audit of safety at the Sellafield plant and this will take account of the incident of 5 February 1986. The findings of the audit will be made public in due course. In the meantime I have asked the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels plc to write to the hon. Member with the detailed information which he requests.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will estimate the savings to the United Kingdom's energy bill of bringing the building regulations up to the same standard as the best of European Economic Community countries;

(2) if he will estimate the savings to the United Kingdom's energy bill of bringing the building regulations up to the same standard as the average of European Economic Community countries;

(3) if his target of a 20 per cent. saving on the United Kingdom's total energy bill during Energy Efficiency Year is based on any assumption of changes in the building regulations.

Mr. David Hunt: The £7 billion estimate of the savings the nation could make through energy efficiency is not based on any specific assumption on future building regulations which apply to new construction.

Because of the different forms of regulations within the European Economic Community, only a broad estimate of the possible impact of different countries' regulations can be made; if all new homes in the United Kingdom were

built to the energy efficiency standards currently applied to Danish housing, the effect after 10 years would be a reduction in energy consumption nationally of less than 1 per cent. The application of average energy efficiency standards within the Community would result in a reduction of less than half that figure.

Geological Survey

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he expects his Department to give oral evidence to Sir Clifford Butler's inquiry into the Geological Survey.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Officials from my Department have already given oral evidence to the inquiry on 17 February.

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether his Department has made a written submission to Sir Clifford Butler's inquiry into the Geological Survey.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Yes. I have today placed copies of the evidence in the Library of the House.

Computers

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to how many computers of United States origin, or supplied by United States subsidiary companies, are in use in the United Kingdom nuclear industry.

Mr. Goodlad: This information is not readily available.

Trawsfynydd Power Station

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) why, on the occasion of an escape of radioactive gas from a pressure relief safety valve at Trawsfynydd power station on 21 February, an emergency alert was not established as soon as radioactive particles were found in the public land near the station; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether inspections are to be completed on the other pressure relief valve filters, besides the one involved in the discharge of gas on 21 February, of the R1 Trawsfynydd power station reactor, and on any similar filters fitted to other Magnox and advanced gas cooled reactor power stations; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether safety checks are to be completed on the pressure relief valves of the R1 Trawsfynydd reactor, on the identical valves of the R2 Trawsfynydd reactor, and on any other similar valves fitted to other Magnox and advanced gas cooled reactor power stations; and if he will make a statement;

(4) why the particular pressure relief valve involved in the gas discharge on 21 February at Trawsfynydd power station lifted on that occasion;

(5) why, when radioactive gas began to escape from a pressure relief safety valve at Trawsfynydd power station on 21 February at 07.50 hours and the first radioactive particles were found at 09.30 hours, a site incident, as specified by the station emergency plan, was not declared until 12.03.

Mr. Goodlad: I have asked the chairman of the CEGB to provide this information. The CEGB, as operator, is responsible for the safety of its operations, and carried out its own technical inquiry immediately after the incident.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Schools (Politics)

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received since 1 March about his draft circular on politics in schools.

Mr. Chris Patten: Four letters have been received since 1 March 1986 and a further six were received in February. It is too early to draw conclusions from the consultations, because the period set aside for them is not yet complete and more replies are expected.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Moynihan asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the current position of the teachers' pay dispute.

Sir Keith Joseph: There has now been a settlement of the 1985 pay claim giving teachers a 6·9 per cent. increase backdated to April last year and a further 1·6 per cent., or 8·5 per cent. in all, from the end of this month. Talks on 1986 and beyond (and covering pay levels, pay structure, appraisal and training, and teachers' duties and responsibilities) have begun under the independent panel appointed by ACAS. It is distressing that even so there has not been a full resumption of normal working in the schools.

University Teachers

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the trend shown by the pay of university staff since 1979; how this compares with movements in the retail prices index in the same period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: Between April 1979 and April 1985 (the date of the last pay increase) the salaries of university non-clinical academic and related staff have increased by 82·2 per cent. as compared with a rise in the retail prices index of 74·6 per cent. during the same period.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many university teachers in the United Kingdom have taken university teaching posts abroad in the past five years; and in what specialities.

Mr. Walden [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 March 1986, c. *473*.]: The available information is shown in the following table. The intended subject department outside the United Kingdom is not known.

University staff leaving for university employment outside the United Kingdom

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Full-time†					
Department at UK university					
1 Education	*	—	*	6	6
2 Medicine, dentistry and health	72	47	51	62	44
3 Engineering and technology	35	42	35	21	25
4 Agriculture, forestry and veterinary science	*	5	*	5	6
5 Biological and physical sciences	125	122	111	108	116

		1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
6	Administrative, business and social studies	44	40	28	34	25
7	Architecture, other professional/ vocational subjects	*	*	5	*	*
8	Language, literature and area studies	38	32	24	15	19
9	Arts, other than languages	10	7	10	6	8
	Unknown	—	—	*	—	—
	Total Full-time	335	299	271	259	250
	Part-time	7	8	*	5	10

* 1-4 staff. Precise numbers are not shown in order to preserve confidentiality for individual staff.

† Including staff seconded or on sabbatical leave or on extensive sick leave.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Mr. Philip Hartlebury

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the most recent representations which Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of Zimbabwe with regard to Philip Hartlebury, a British subject.

Mrs. Chalker: The most recent ministerial representation to the Government of Zimbabwe was made in January 1985 by my right hon. and learned Friend when he raised the case with the Minister of State in the Prime Minister's office during his visit to Zimbabwe.

Since then, our high commission in Harare has continued to ensure that the Zimbabwean authorities are aware of our hope that the man can be released soon. Its most recent inquiries were made in mid-February of this year.

British Exports (France)

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make respresentations to the French Government regarding the level of fines on British lorry drivers in respect of deliveries, including lamb, from Britain to France.

Mr. Eggar: We are ready to intervene, as we have on several occasions in the past, on behalf of British nationals in cases where there is clear evidence of unfair penalties being levied by overseas authorities. I would be happy to look at any individual cases which the hon. Member may wish to draw to my attention.

Sahara Arab Republic

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have been held with representatives of the Polisario Front about recognition of the Sahara Arab Republic.

Mr. Renton: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave the hon. Member on 17 December, at columns 133-34.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been received from the Organisation of African Unity seeking recognition by the United Kingdom of the Sahara Arab Republic.

Mr. Renton: None.

El Salvador

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what human rights organisations in El Salvador have had meetings with Her Majesty's diplomatic representatives in the period since January 1984.

Mr. Eggar: Our representatives in El Salvador have had meetings with the four main human rights organisations: Tutela Legal, Socorro Juridico, the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on Human Rights in El Salvador, and others with an interest in the subject.

GCHQ, Cheltenham

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest position of those employees at Government Communications Headquarters who have rejoined or remained in a trade union.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. and learned Friend gave the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) on 19 March, at column 293.

Iran-Iraq War

Sir Peter Emery asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence has been provided to Her Majesty's Government about the use of chemical warfare in the conflict between Iraq and Iran, what examination Her Majesty's Government have made of such evidence; what action Her Majesty's Government have taken to condemn the use of these chemical weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: On 14 March 1986 the Secretary General released the report of a team of specialists on allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the conflict between Iran and Iraq. In his covering note the Secretary General stated that the specialists had confirmed the use of chemical weapons by Iraqi forces against Iranian forces in the course of the present Iranian offensive into Iraqi territory. The report is being considered by the United Nations Security Council and the United Kingdom is closely involved in these discussions. Our policy on chemical weapons is well known: we condemn the use of chemical weapons wherever and whenever it occurs, including the clear breach of the Geneva protocol detailed in the Secretary General's report.

Sir Peter Emery asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have condemned the shooting down of a civilian aircraft by an Iraqi fighter plane over Iranian airspace; what advice he has given to British passengers travelling in Iran; and what representations he has made to the Government of Iraq over this matter.

Mr. Renton: We condemn the destruction of any aircraft in commercial use and consider that the use of armed force against civil aviation is incompatible with the norms governing international behaviour. We fully supported Security Council resolution 582, which was unanimously adopted on 24 February, and which deplored

attacks on civilian aircraft. At present no British aircraft fly into Iran. British passengers on other airlines who make inquiries are advised of the current threat to Iranian airspace.

WALES

Nurses

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of mental handicap community nurses employed in Wales for each year since 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is given in the following table:

Mental handicap community nurses employed

*Year**	*Number*	*Whole-time equivalent*
1980	8	8·0
1981	19	17·5
1982	23	21·1
1983	40	39·6
1984	48	48·0
1985	60	60·0

* As at 30 September.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each year since 1979 the number of registered sick children's nurses in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information available centrally is not sufficiently detailed to allow registered sick children's nurses to be separately identified.

Social Services Departments

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to increase funding to local authority social services departments in proportion to the increased number of elderly people living in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The impact of the increasing numbers of elderly people on the work of the local authority social services departments is reflected in the annual rate support grant settlements. In addition we have set aside further provision of £1 million in 1986-87, rising to £5 million over three years, to finance schemes arising out of our "A Good Old Age" initiative about which, following recent consultation, we expect to make a further anouncement.

Employment Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many manufacturing jobs have been created in Wales so far in the current year; and how many have been created in Wales in each of the last six years.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: It is not possible to say how many new manufacturing jobs have been created since 1979. However, projects for which offers of regional selective assistance or, where applicable, regional development grants were accepted, or which were allocated Government financed factories have promised to provide over 90,000 jobs in Wales since May 1979.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many manufacturing jobs have been lost in Wales in each of the last six years.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Information is not available in the form requested, but data on net changes in the total of manufacturing employees in employment is provided in the Department of Employment's quarterly series. Following are the figures up to the latest available date:

Employees in Employment in Manufacturing Industries

	Number
September 1980	277,000
September 1981	238,000
September 1982	222,000
September 1983	213,000
September 1984	209,000
September 1985	207,000

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many jobs in the agricultural sector have been lost in Wales in each of the last six years.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Figures for jobs in the agricultural sector as a whole are not available. However, the agricultural census shows the following number of persons engaged in work on agricultural holdings at June in each of the last six years:

	Number
1980	66,400
1981	66,700
1982	66,500
1983	65,300
1984	66,800
1985	68,400

Public Transport

Mr. Harvey asked the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements he proposes to make for the operation in Wales of the grants provided for by section 108 of the Transport Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: £100,000 is to be made available for these grants in 1986-87. This will be used to assist in the establishment, continuance or improvement of any public passenger transport project for the benefit of persons residing in rural areas in Wales. The particular conditions of the grant scheme—which were established in consultations with local authorities in Wales—are set out in the grant memorandum a copy of which I have placed in the Library of the House.

PRIME MINISTER

Social Security Bill

Q108. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Prime Minister what representations she has received about the impact of the Social Security Bill on disabled people and those who care for them; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him and to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) by my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security on 25 February at columns *527-28*.

"Official Report"

Q129. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister what is her general practice in deciding whether to seek to correct the *Official Report* in respect of speeches or statements by her in the House in cases where it is subesequently drawn to her attention that an error may have been made; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: If an error is drawn to my attention I would normally seek to correct it in an appropriate way.

Engagements

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 March.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 March.

Mr. Hunter asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 March.

Mr. Beith asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 March.

Mr. Dormand asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 March.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 March.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I attended the memorial service for Mr. Palme in Westminster abbey. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

"Fire Safety in the Home"

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to draw urgently to the attention of all Government Departments, and to local and other public authorities, the conclusions and recommendations of the report entitled "Fire Safety in the Home", published by the fire services committee of the Greater Manchester council; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government Departments principally concerned have already received a copy of the report and are considering the conclusions and recommendations.

Intergovernmental Undertaking

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister who signed the intergovernmental undertaking published in Comnd. 9395 on behalf of the United Kingdom Government.

The Prime Minister: The 1984 Intergovernmental Agreement was concluded at the Foreign Affairs Council on 2 and 3 October 1984. The United Kingdom was represented by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. In accordance with practice at such meetings the assent of the member states was not given by formal signature but by their acceptance of the undertaking during the meeting.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Guinness-Distillers Merger

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what account he proposes to take of the implications for the export trade in deciding on a possible reference of the proposed revised Guinness-Distillers merger to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Howard: The Minister of State for Industry and Information Technology will make his decision in the light of advice from the Director General of Fair Trading. The implications for the export trade, together with all other relevant factors, will be taken into account.

Manufactured Goods (Exports and Imports)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the real terms index for United Kingdom exports and imports of manufactured goods, taking 1979 as 100 in each case.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is as follows:

United Kingdom Trade in Manufactures Volume Indices—1979=100

	Exports	*Imports*
1979	100·0	100·0
1980	101·0	99·2
1981	95·0	97·2
1982	96·7	106·4
1983	96·4	120·5
1984	105·4	133·0
1985	111·9	139·5

Foam-filled Furniture

Mr. Burt asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to modify the regulations regarding foam-filled furniture in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on 14 March at column *600*.

Mr. Burt asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has about research into the safety aspects of foam-filled furniture in the United States; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I have received a number of reports and papers on this topic, from which it is clear that research in the United States has not produced definite answers to the problem of flammability of foam-filled furniture. In California fire-resistant foams are required by law, but these products containing well-known fire retardant additives do not provide a reliable and positive answer to the problem of ignition of typical combinations of fabric and filling. In one well-publicised test at the National Bureau of Standards the burning of a chair made of "California foam" produced more heat more quickly than chairs made of a standard foam. Alternative types of foam such as those with high resilience, melamine foams and foams containing hydrated alumina are considerably more expensive than standard foams. All this information is available as background to my current discussions with the British furniture industry on ways of improving the fire resistance and performance in fire of upholstered furniture in Britain.

Cigarettes (Upholstery Fires)

Mr. Burt asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether a survey on the ability of cigarettes to continue smouldering when placed in a situation comparable to that under which upholstery ignitability is tested has been instituted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The Department undertook a survey to identify any self-extinguishing properties in cigarettes on the United Kingdom market last year, using a procedure published by the National Bureau of Standards of the United States. No significant difference was discovered in the smouldering properties of various brands.

The United States Congress has commissioned a technical study group under the Cigarette Safety Act to examine the feasibility of producing self-extinguishing cigarettes and to report by mid-1987. The results of this work will be closely studied in the United Kingdom by those concerned with fire prevention and also by those concerned with the health aspects of smoking.

Polyurethane Foam

Mr. Burt asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether a report has been yet submitted by Queen Mary college, university of London, concerning its research into flexible polyurethane foam; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The research aspects of the project at Queen Mary college, sponsored by the British Rubber Manufacturers Association, into "combustion-modified" polyurethane foam are complete: a report should be in the hands of the sponsors by the end of this month. Development work is proceeding.

It is likely, because of higher cost and different specification procedures, that products developed from this research will find application in contract seating before they are used in domestic furniture.

ABTA (Stabiliser Agreement)

Mr. Fry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement regarding the effects of the material changes proposed to be made by the Association of British Travel Agents to the stabiliser agreement as upheld by the Restrictive Practices Court in December 1983 Case: 1978 No. 13 (E & W).

Mr. Howard: Under the Restrictive Trade Practices Act, it is the responsibility of the Director General of Fair Trading to refer certain agreements to the Restrictive Practices Court for a judgment as to whether the restrictions on those agreements are contrary to the public interest. If, subsequently, the Director-General of Fair Trading obtains prima facie evidence of a material change in the circumstances on which the court's decision was based, he has powers to seek leave to apply for to the court for a variation of its decision.

"Fire Safety in the Home"

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consideration he has given to the report entitled "Fire Safety in the Home", published by the fire services committee of the Greater Manchester council; if there is any action he will be taking arising from the report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I shall take account of the report in my current review of legislation on the fire resistance of domestic upholstered furniture. I hope to announce the results of this review shortly.

General Motors-BL Merger

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assurances are being sought in respect of continuity of employment for Bedford employees in the event of the merger of General Motors and British Leyland trucks and vans.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No decisions have been made but the Government's aim is a solution which offers the best prospects of securing long-term jobs in the United Kingdom commercial vehicles industry as a whole. International competitiveness is the only guarantee of the long-term viability of the industry and the protection of jobs.

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what assessment he has made of the effect on future levels of British truck production at different plants of the proposed merger between General Motors and British Leyland's truck division;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect on future levels of British van production at different plants of the proposed merger between General Motors and British Leyland's van division.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No decisions have been made about the future of the businesses. However, the Government would like to see increased United Kingdom van and truck output as a result of improving competitiveness.

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the implications for the proposed merger between General Motors and British Leyland's van and truck divisions of General Motors' worldwide trucks and van sales strategy.

Mr. Peter Morrison: GM has told me that should its proposals to acquire the Land Rover-Leyland businesses be accepted, the United Kingdom would be the European centre for its truck and van operations, and that the new entity would have access to GM's worldwide sales network, including that of Opel for vans in Europe.

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on General Motors' investment programme for Dunstable and Luton plants in the context of discussions on the proposed merger with British Leyland trucks and vans.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No decisions have been made. Should GM's proposals be accepted, it has said that it would be willing to give undertakings that an appropriate level of investment would be made in the business to achieve competitive future models and facilities.

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the future of British Leyland's test centre at Leyland in the light of the proposed merger with General Motors and of its test centres at Luton and Millbrook.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No decisions have been made. The utilisation of particular facilities will be a matter for the future management of the businesses.

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what assessment he has made of the effects of the proposed merger between General Motors and British Leyland on the constituent parts of the British motor parts central stocking and distribution sector;

(2) what assessment he has made of the implications for British stampings factory units of the proposed merger between British Leyland and General Motors.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No decisions have been made. The Government are seeking a solution which offers the best prospects for the United Kingdom commercial vehicle industry as a whole, and full consideration will be given to all relevant factors including the effect on the components and distribution sectors.

Military Vehicles

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the implications for the British commercial vehicles industry of the agreement between General Motors and M.A.N. on military vehicles.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I understand that this agreement is very recent. However GM has told me that it attaches a high priority to serving the needs of the United Kingdom armed forces from United Kingdom sources as it has done since the 1930s.

Commercial Vehicles

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of future levels of British production and demand for vans and trucks.

Mr. Peter Morrison: We do not make any independent forecast of future levels of British production and demand for vans and trucks, but we do carefully consider the forecasts made available to us by firms and other organisations.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the main provisions of the negotiating mandate, in relation to the renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement, agreed by the EEC Council of Ministers meeting on 10 and 11 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on the outcome of his discussions with European partners concerning a new multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The mandate contains much detail on the negotiating limits given to the Commission in relation to particular features of the negotiating line both on the proposed protocol on the proposed agreements with individual countries. For reasons the hon. Member will understand these have to remain confidential. I gave the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) some information by written answer on 12 March and at this stage I cannot usefully add to this. I shall remain in close touch with the negotiations and maintain contact with the industries and other interested parties; I shall also inform the House of significant developments.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Young People (Offences)

9. **Mr. Woodall** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the percentage increase in the number of young people under 21 years cautioned for, or found guilty of, burglary between 1979 and 1984.

22. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many young people aged under 21 years were cautioned for, and found guilty of, burglary in 1979 and 1984, respectively.

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many young people under 21 years were cautioned for, or found guilty of, indictable offences in 1979 and 1984, respectively.

Mr. Hurd: In 1979 just under 275,000 offenders under 21 were cautioned for or found guilty of indictable offences; the figure for 1984 was nearly 305,000. Of these, 169,000 in 1979 and just under 178,000 in 1984 were offences of theft or handling stolen goods. For burglary, the figures were 49,400 in 1979 and 59,900 in 1984, an increase of 21 per cent.

32. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the percentage increase in the number of young people under 21 years cautioned for, and found guilty of, indictable offences between 1979 and 1984.

Mr. Mellor: 11 per cent.

37. **Ms. Richardson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the percentage increase in the number of young people aged under 21 years cautioned for, or found guilty of, theft between 1979 and 1984.

Mr. Mellor: Five per cent.

Crime Prevention

11. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what financial assistance is available from his Department for crime prevention measures by *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* private citizens.

Mr. Hurd: The main ways in which the Government provide funds for crime prevention projects are through the Department of the Environment's urban programme, under which £6·3 million was allocated in 1985; and the expanded community programme, which is currently allocating about £18 million for places devoted to crime prevention projects.

21. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assistance his Department provides for crime prevention for low-income families.

23. **Mr. Clelland** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any proposals to give greater assistance to low-income families and pensioner households in crime prevention.

27. **Mr. Evans** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will introduce grants for crime prevention for pensioners and low-income families.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Financial support through the urban and community programmes continues to be available for schemes designed to prevent crime or alleviate its effects.

Many such schemes are specifically intended to help those most at risk, including low-income families and the elderly. We increasingly provide advice to local authorities, the police and the community generally in promoting crime prevention initiatives. The Home Office Standing Conference on Crime Prevention, through its working group on residential burglary, is seeking to devise a low-cost security package to protect residential dwellings which might be purchased by those living in particularly vulnerable areas such as the inner city.

35. **Mr. Welsh** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will introduce legislation to provide that expenditure by local authorities on designated measures of crime prevention should be eligible for the same support from central funds as expenditure on the police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Government make funds available to local authorities for crime prevention projects through the urban and community programmes, but we do not consider legislation of the kind called for by the hon. Member justified. Much crime prevention activity does not require new money, but rather the better use of existing resources.

41. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new publicity initiatives his Department is launching to promote awareness of crime prevention initiatives.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have recently launched a major publicity campaign in the north of England, at a cost of £1·7 million, primarily aimed at the prevention of burglary and autocrime. We are also involved in producing a wide range of publicity material on a variety of topics including, local publicity for five local crime prevention demonstration projects, crime prevention material for ethnic minorities, and a new booklet on shop theft. Arrangements have also been made for the distribution of leaflets on the prevention of autocrime with all vehicle licence reminders.

42. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to sustain the progress made in developing crime prevention.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We are making progress on a number of fronts:

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister chaired a successful seminar on 8 January which will be followed up in the summer.

Five working groups have been set up to look at: car security, residential burglary, shop theft, commercial robbery, violence associated with licensed premises.

Five local demonstration projects with Home Office funded co-ordinators have been established.

A national crime prevention initiative funded through the expanded community programme is being developed.

The successful "Magpies" publicity campaign has been extended to the north of the country.

Burglary

18. **Mr. Chris Smith** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offences of burglary were recorded in the most recent quarter for which figures are available and in the equivalent quarter of 1979.

Mr. Mellor: The police recorded 228,000 burglaries in the fourth quarter of 1985 compared with 165,000 in the fourth quarter of 1980. Because of changes in the counting rules from the beginning of 1980, comparisons with 1979 would be misleading. The number of recorded burglaries last year was 3 per cent. less than in 1984.

Constabulary (North-East)

19. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received any recent request to increase the establishment of any constabulary in the north-east.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have received an application for an increase in police establishment from the Northumbria interim police authority.

Immigration

20. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from representatives of immigration officers or their unions about the draft guidelines on the handling of representations by hon. Members in immigration cases since 11 February.

Mr. Waddington: None.

Civil Defence

24. **Mr. Aspinwall** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Government have any plans to seek to require local authorities to increase their emergency staff establishments to enable them to meet their civil defence responsibilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Government intend that the new fire and civil defence authorities will be adequately staffed to meet their civil defence resposibilities. We have no plans to extend the temporary controls available for these authorities to others, but consideration will be given to what guidance on manpower levels would be right when the assessment of progress on implementation of the 1983 regulations is complete.

47. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Government have a target for the number of civil defence volunteers to be recruited by the end of 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Not at present, but we will consider this when the assessment of progress on implementation of the 1983 regulations is complete.

49. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has contingency plans for calling on civil defence volunteers to assist the emergency services in the event of terrorist use of chemical weapons or materials.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No, civil defence volunteers are community-based and their help in any emergency would be a matter for local decision.

61. **Mr. Neil Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to set a date by which local authorities will be required to undertake the responsibilities laid down in the 1983 civil defence regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: It is intended that target dates will form part of the planned programme of implementation of the 1983 regulations which will be issued to local authorities later this year.

Prison Officers (Training)

25. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to increase the basic training of prison officers.

Mr. Mellor: No. The initial training course for prison officers was thoroughly reviewed and extended, last year, by one week.

Police Officers (Training)

26. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will introduce proposals for a minimum six months' basic training for police officers.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The training of police recruits is already based on the concept of a two-year apprenticeship, including a lengthy period of initial training centrally as well as further periods of training in force during the two years.

Miss Hilda Murrell

28. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Northumberland about the progress of police inquiries into the death of Miss Hilda Murrell; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Responsibility for the investigation into the death of Miss Murrell rests with the chief constable of West Mercia. The position remains unchanged from the reply given to the hon. Member on 13 February, at column 518.

Offences Against the Person (Penalties)

29. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received about the level of penalties available to the courts for offences against the person involving or including robbery.

Mr. Mellor: We receive few representations about robbery as distinct from other crimes of violence. Since 1 January the Department has received 45 letters about penalties for offences including robbery, 20 of which were forwarded by right hon. and hon. Members. The maximum penalty upon conviction for robbery is life imprisonment.

Prison Officers (House Purchase)

30. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on progress in negotiations about the arrangements whereby officers of the prison service, who are occupying prison property, can buy their homes.

Mr. Mellor: A third and final offer, combining the opportunity to buy quarters at discount and changes in associated conditions of service, was decisively rejected by a ballot of members of the Prison Officer's Association last December. In the light of this outcome we are considering whether there are alternative ways, consistent with their existing conditions of service, in which prison officers may be helped to own their own homes.

Police Complaints Procedure

31. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will introduce proposals for a police complaints procedure wholly independent of the police force.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. The Police Complaints Authority was established only on 29 April 1985 but is already demonstrating its value as a wholly independent body supervising the investigation of serious complaints against the police.

52. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to seek to make any changes regarding the availability of information to complainants arising from cases investigated under the new police complaints procedures and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No.

Crime Statistics

33. **Mr. Jim Callaghan** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish the crime statistics for the calendar year 1985.

Mr. Mellor: Statistics of notifiable offences recorded by the police in 1985 were published on 13 March in Home Office *Statistical Bulletin* issue number 4/86.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the clear-up rate for all crimes in Wales in each of the last six years.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is given in the following table.

Clear-up rate for notifiable offences recorded by the police in Wales

	Percentage
1980	50
1981	49
1982	50
1983	50
1984	47
1985	47

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes of violence have taken place in Wales in each of the last six years.

Mr. Mellor: The numbers of notifiable offences recorded by the police in Wales in 1985 were published, by type of offence, in Home Office Statistical Bulletin, issue No. 4/86 (table 6); corresponding figures for earlier years are given in the annual publication "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (table 2.5 of the issue for 1984, Cmnd. 9621).

Prison Population

34. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the prison population on 31 December 1985 and on the most recent available date.

Mr. Mellor: On 31 December 1985 the prison population in England and Wales was 44,419. On 14 March 1986 it was 47,009.

56. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current prison population of England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: On 14 March 1986 the prison population in England and Wales was 47,009.

Police Stations

36. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of police stations in west Yorkshire in each of the years 1975, 1983 and 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable that there were 93 police stations in west Yorkshire in 1975, 73 in 1983 and 71 in December 1985.

55. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police stations there were in England and Wales in each of the years 1983, 1984 and 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This information is not recorded centrally for all police areas in England and Wales.

54. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police stations there were in Wales in each of the years 1976, 1983 and 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable concerned that there were 481 police stations in Wales in 1976, 430 in 1983 and 409 in December 1985.

Tottenham (Public Disorder)

38. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what conclusions he has reached on the lessons to be learnt from the report entitled "Public Disorder in Tottenham, 6th October 1985" submitted to him by Deputy Assistant Commissioner Richards.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Mr. Richards' report was addressed to the Haringey Police Community Consultative Group, which met to consider it on 13 March. The Commisioner is considering the lessons to be learnt from the riots last autumn at Brixton and Tottenham in his review of tactics and equipment.

Complaints Against the Police

39. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of complaints against the police have resulted in prosecution in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The available information gives the number of prosecutions brought each year against police officers as a result of complaints from members of the public, but does not indicate the year in which each complaint was made. The following table shows that number as a proportion of all complaints cases completed in the corresponding year. Withdrawn complaints have been excluded. Comparable information is not available for the years prior to 1978.

Year	*Per cent.*
1978	*1·3
1979	0·7
1980	0·5
1981	0·4
1982	0·3
1983	0·3
1984	0·2

* In 1978 there was an abnormally high number of traffic prosecutions brought against Metropolitan officers as a result of complaints.

Detention Centres

40. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the future of detention centres.

Mr. Mellor: Several aspects of the detention centre system are being considered.

Licensing Hours

43. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received in respect of flexible licensing hours.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier today to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox).

Shops Bill *[Lords]*

44. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from Scotland regarding the Shops Bill *[Lords]*; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I regret that a separate record is not kept of representations from Scotland and the information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. But the number of letters received has not been large and some of those which have been brought to my attention were clearly written by people who think Sunday trading in Scotland is restricted.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

45. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the latest number and progress of neighbourhood watch schemes.

Mr. Giles Shaw: There are over 9,200 neighbourhood watch schemes in existence in England and Wales, the number having almost trebled in the past year. Steps are being taken to monitor the progress of a number of schemes and preliminary indications suggest that, where they are carefully designed and introduced, crime is reduced. The results of this work will provide useful lessons in developing further schemes.

Schools (Police Liaison)

46. **Mr. Forth** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what initiatives are being taken to increase and improve police liaison with schools.

Mr. Giles Shaw: A joint working party of the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Society of Education Officers has been examining the nature and

extent of police involvement with schools and a guidance document designed to encourage co-operation and understanding at local level is to be published shortly.

Citizens Advice Bureaux

48. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had regarding the future ability of citizens advice bureaux to provide advice on matters related to his responsibilities; and what replies he has given.

Mr. Waddington: None.

Crossbows

50. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is yet in a position to announce whether he plans to introduce legislation to restrict the sale of crossbows; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend is considering whether any steps could usefully be taken to try to prevent crossbows falling into the wrong hands. He is expected to reach conclusions shortly.

Police-Community Forums

51. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will next be meeting Her Majesty's inspectors of constabularies to discuss police-community forums.

Mr. Giles Shaw: As I explained in reply to a question from my hon. Friend on 20 February, at column *302*, Her Majesty's inspectors keep us informed on a regular basis by means of their inspection reports of the progress that is being made in the establishment of consultative arrangements. This topic is not the subject of specific meetings with Her Majesty's inspectors.

Search Warrants

55. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set up an investigation into the way in which the search warrant system is currently working; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 made significant changes to the procedure for police applications for search warrants, designed to ensure that those issuing warrants are fully aware of the circumstances of the application before they reach a decision. The code of practice on the searching of premises, which accompanies the Act, lays down detailed requirements on the conduct of police searches. The principal purpose of the code of practice is to see that search powers are exercised responsibly, and with minimum distress to those whose premises are the subject of a search.

These provisions have been in operation only since 1 January 1986. I understand that as part of its programme of research to monitor the operation of the 1984 Act the Economic and Social Research Council has decided to support research into the operation of the search and seizure provisions under part II of this Act. This will include arrangements for obtaining and executing search warrants.

Hospital and Transport Staff (Attacks)

57. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, when he next meets the chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers, he will discuss steps taken by the police to prevent attacks on hospital staff and transport staff.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Violence to staff was discussed at the recent seminar on crime prevention chaired by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister which was attended by the president of the Association of Chief Police Officers. As a result of the seminar, a working party has been established to conduct a study of crime, including violence to passengers and staff, on the London Underground. Studies on violence to staff, including particularly road transport staff and NHS staff, are also being undertaken.

Unsolicited Mail

58. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration has been given in the formulation of policy on crime prevention, and particularly the prevention of burglary, to the problems of quantities of unsolicited mail indicating the absence of the occupier of a house.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Home Office has been in touch with the distributors of free newspapers and other material about how best to tackle the crime hazards which can be caused by unsolicited literature. A code of practice for publishers produced by the Association of Free Newspapers now includes a crime prevention element. In addition, police forces advise householders to seek the help of a neighbour to ensure unsolicited mail is not left visible while they are away.

Special Constables

59. **Mr. Moynihan** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the role of special constables.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We see an important role for the special constabulary as a trained body of reserves to assist the regular police at times of unusual pressure and as a practical link between the police and the public. We shall continue to encourage chief officers to recruit as many special constables as they can usefully train and deploy for various tasks, including crime prevention. Last year there was a further modest increase in the number of special constables in England and Wales bringing the total to 16,186 at 31 December 1985.

Freemasonry

60. **Mr. Clay** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from all chief constables about their policy on the membership of freemasons' lodges by members of their forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. The police regulations require police officers to abstain from any activity which is likely to interfere with the impartial discharge of their duties. It is for chief officers of police to determine whether guidance should be issued to their forces on the extent to which membership of a masonic lodge might be regarded

as conflicting with this statutory requirement. All chief officers of police have received copies of the guidance which was issued by the Metropolitan police.

Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act

62. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has decided to seek to alter the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act to allow information about a wanted offender to be released to the public.

Mr. Mellor: The requirement of anonymity for a person accused of rape provided by section 6 of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1976 applies only after an information has been laid or the defendant has appeared before a court; it needs not hinder inquiries, including the release of information about a person the police wish to interview, up to that point. As my hon. Friend is aware, we are giving sympathetic consideration to the proposal of the Criminal Law Revision Committee that section 6 should be repealed.

BBC (Output Balance)

63. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he takes to monitor the British Broadcasting Corporation's output in respect of acting in conformity with its charter and producing a politically balanced output of programmes.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on 20 February, at column 302.

Protection of Animals Act 1911

64. **Mr. Fry** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to amend the Protection of Animals Act 1911; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Government have no present plans to amend the Protection of Animals Act 1911. We share the public abhorrence of acts of cruelty against domestic and captive animals, but believe that the existing law deals adequately with these offences.

Prisoners (Drugs)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many behaviour-modifying drugs, by type, have been issued to inmates of Her Majesty's prisons during the last seven years; and what proportion of such drugs issued was valium;

(2) how many behaviour-modifying drugs have been issued to inmates in Her Majesty's prisons Holloway and Styal during the last seven years; what proportion of such drugs issued was valium; and how many inmates admitted to either of these prisons during the same period had been prescribed drugs to be taken on a regular basis by their general practitioner prior to admission.

Mr. Mellor: Statistical records of medicines administered to inmate patients to not enable identification of specific proprietary brands (such as valium) or their generic equivalents. Statistical records of medicines prescribed for patients before their reception into prison custody are not kept by the Department.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to receive the report of the interdepartmental working party reviewing the operation of the criminal injuries compensation scheme.

Mr. Mellor: I understand that the report is currently being completed and will be submitted shortly.

Fires (Statistics)

Mr. Burt asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give figures for fatal and non-fatal casualties from accidental fires in dwellings, by source of ignition, in 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Provisional figures of casualties from accidental fires in dwellings in the United Kingdom in 1984 analysed by source of ignition, are published in table 11 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin, issue No. 3/86, "Summary Fire Statistics United Kingdom 1984". A more detailed analysis, of final figures, by source of ignition will be given in "Fire Statistics United Kingdom 1984" which it is planned to publish in May. Information for 1985 is not yet available.

Community Radio

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to complete his consideration of the recommendations of the advisory panel on community radio.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We are not yet in a position to say when our consideration will be completed.

"Fire Safety in the Home"

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to the report entitled "Fire Safety in the Home", published by the fire services committee of the Greater Manchester council; if there is any other action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Home Office officials are considering the report, which was recently sent to the Department and will consult as necessary with the other Government Departments concerned. The matters raised in the report which are primarily for this Department relate to the arrangements for fire safety education and publicity and the effectiveness of automatic fire detectors in the home. Both these subjects are kept under regular review.

Entry Refusals

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Islington North of 16 January, *Official Report*, columns *623-25* concerning arrivals from Bangladesh, how many of them refused entry were *(a)* subsequently given temporary admission, *(b)* returned to Bangladesh and *(c)* returned to a third country;

(2) pursuant to his reply of 16 January, *Official Report*, columns *623-24*, concerning persons denied entry, how many of those refused entry were *(a)* subsequently given temporary admission, *(b)* returned to their country of origin and *(c)* returned to a third country.

Mr. Waddington [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 March, c. *9-10*]: The precise information requested is not available centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The following table gives the readily available information. Information on the destination of those removed and on the nationality of those granted temporary admission is not available.

	Numbers of passengers removed from the United Kingdom during December 1985 after being refused entry		*Numbers of passengers granted temporary admission during December 1985 following an initial refusal*
	All nationalities	*of which Bangladeshis*	*All nationalities*
Heathrow			
Terminal 1	114	2	19
Terminal 2	285	2	88
Terminal 3	688	140	504
Gatwick	287	8	20
Dover (Eastern docks, Western docks and Hoverport)	267	15	13

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, for each year since 1979, the numbers and ranks of Metropolitan police officers disciplined, demoted, suspended, dismissed from the force or required to resign following a successful civil action against the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for a wrongful act by an officer.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 February 1986, c. *416*]: I understand that, in the years 1980 to 1985, only one case occurred in which Metropolitan police officers were subjected to disciplinary proceedings following a successful civil action against the Commissioner. In that case, which was in 1982, four officers were charged with disciplinary offences. One officer admitted the offence and was punished by a reduction in his rate of pay; the three others were found not guilty.

In most cases where a complainant pursues a civil action, he refuses to make a statement for the purpose of an investigation, which cannot then be completed. Where the civil action is successful, the case is reviewed to determine whether further investigation should be undertaken. Regard is had to the time that has elapsed since the incident on which the civil action was based, to the effect of the passage of time on the witnesses' ability to recall events and on the officer's ability to defend himself and to the difference in the standards of proof in civil proceedings and disciplinary proceedings.

DEFENCE

Undergraduates (Army Sponsorship)

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of undergraduate students who are at present being sponsored at *(a)* universities, *(b)* polytechnics and *(c)* colleges of higher education by Her Majesty's forces; and what income they are receiving per annum under (i) the cadetship scheme and (ii) the bursary scheme.

Mr. Lee: The numbers requested are as follows:

Royal Navy
(including Women's Royal Naval Service and Royal Marines)

	No.
Cadetships	79
Bursaries	119
Medical/Dental Cadets	*44
Nominations†	29

* includes nine bursars—only the RN offers medical bursaries.
† young serving officers who decide to read for a degree after entering the Service.

Numbers of students subdivided into universities, polytechnics and colleges of higher education are not held centrally for the Royal Navy.

Army

	Universities	*Polytechnics*	*Further Education Colleges*
Cadets	120	6	—
Bursars	345	60	12
Medical/Dental Cadets	115	—	—
In-Service Students	24	—	—
	RAF		
Cadets	229	20	1
Bursars	40	7	1
Medical/Dental Cadets	*20	—	—

* This figure relates to numbers of awards made in 1985-86 and not numbers in residence.

Figures exclude those sponsored and reading for degrees at the Royal Military College of Science.

Under the university cadetship scheme, students are commissioned to the appropriate service before beginning their further education and receive full service pay for the three-four years of their course. For the Army and Royal Air Force the following scale applies:

	£ per annum
On appointment	5,060
After 1 year	5,670
After 2 years	6,280

In the Royal Navy cadets serve for up to one year in the service before entering further education and they are therefore paid as serving officers as follows:

	£ per annum
Before entry to further education	5,172
During first student year	5,796
During second student year	6,420
During third student year	7,490

Medical and dental cadets for each service are paid as follows:

	£ per annum
On appointment	5,810
After 1 year	6,505
After 2 years	7,195

Bursars receive £900 per annum in each service.

Northern Ireland (Army Units)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make an official visit to Army units stationed in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Younger: I hope to do so shortly.

Computers

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many computers supplied by DEC are in use by his Department and in the armed forces.

Mr. Norman Lamont: DEC computers are in widespread use in the Department and in the armed services. They range from large mainframe computers through to microcomputers. Some are supplied by contractors other than DEC as part of a larger project. The precise number in use would require disproportionate effort to determine.

North American Air Defence (Command and Control Systems)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to the answer of 11 March to the hon. Member for Islington, North, *Official Report*, column 795, he will state the nature of the training exercise concerned.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on 22 November 1985, at column 354.

EMPLOYMENT

Visual Display Units

Mr. Bermingham asked the Paymaster General, in the light of the latest Swedish study showing that mice exposed to low-level radiation from visual display units produce a higher than average incidence of stillborn or deformed offspring, what steps he proposes to take to strengthen the National Radiological Protection Board's powers to regulate and control hazards arising from low level radiation.

Mr. Trippier: Early reports of the Swedish study suggested a higher than average incidence of birth defects but in fact no significant increase was found. The National Radiological Protection Board does not consider that emissions from visual display units present a risk during pregnancy.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Paymaster General if, in the light of the industrial tribunal's decision in the cases of Mrs. Hazel Johnson from Inverness, he proposes to issue any further guidelines to employers in case of pregnant women working with visual display units.

Mr. Trippier: The Health and Safety Executive has recently published a free guidance leaflet on working with visual display units. The leaflet advises that there is no reason for pregnant women to stop working with visual display units but they should consult a doctor if they have any doubts.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Paymaster General what steps he proposes to take in conjunction with the Health and Safety Executive to seek to control static electricity and heat build-up in offices from visual display units.

Mr. Trippier: Existing Health and Safety Executive guidance deals with the control of static electricity and other relevant environmental factors. The executive continues to keep possible health risks from visual display units under review. Guidance will be revised as necessary.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Patchett asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the latest unemployment figures for the Barnsley, East Constituency, categorised by sex, age and the duration of unemployment for the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Lang: Following is the requested information, which is available in the Library.

Age and Duration Analysis of the Unemployed for Statistical Date 9 January 1986
Males

Barnsley East Parliamentary Constituency

Duration of Unemployment in weeks	*Under 17*	*17*	*18*	*19*	*20-24*	*25-29*	*30-34*	*35-39*	*40-44*	*45-49*	*50-54*	*55-59*	*60 and over*	*Total*
One or less	4	8	7	0	12	9	11	7	2	1	4	2	1	68
Over 1 and up to 2	3	4	3	2	18	29	20	27	26	21	42	8	3	206
Over 2 and up to 4	5	6	9	6	15	10	9	16	10	8	154	57	3	305
Over 4 and up to 6	2	16	101	1	21	14	9	10	7	11	71	22	6	210
Over 6 and up to 8	6	7	6	7	19	8	11	5	5	5	8	5	5	97
Over 8 and up to 13	11	27	13	9	44	21	26	26	20	26	40	20	7	290
Over 13 and up to 26	71	70	61	26	86	58	41	31	26	20	138	273	51	952
Over 26 and up to 39	8	45	38	24	60	34	31	27	14	17	42	49	16	405
Over 39 and up to 52	0	8	16	18	29	19	15	14	11	8	13	17	5	173
Over 52 and up to 65	0	7	19	19	31	18	12	15	11	6	9	13	4	164
Over 65 and up to 78	0	26	20	18	37	15	13	15	12	8	8	13	0	185
Over 78 and up to 104	0	1	16	17	35	31	21	25	17	12	27	54	2	280
Over 104 and up to 156	0	0	14	25	58	54	45	44	30	24	26	103	0	433
Over 156 and up to 208	0	0	0	8	56	29	33	26	31	12	20	49	0	264
Over 208 and up to 260	0	0	0	0	43	25	30	30	24	19	17	25	0	213
Over 260	0	0	0	0	27	46	52	53	31	27	34	43	0	313
Grand totals Males	110	225	231	190	621	420	379	371	277	225	653	753	103	4,558

Females

Duration of Unemployment in weeks	Under 17	17	18	19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60 and over	Total
One or less	7	8	2	4	21	6	4	4	5	3	2	0	0	66
Over 1 and up to 2	2	3	2	0	5	5	4	5	6	6	1	1	0	40
Over 2 and up to 4	1	5	6	4	23	11	4	4	5	3	5	1	0	72
Over 4 and up to 6	3	9	1	7	19	10	8	3	3	6	0	2	0	71
Over 6 and up to 8	3	7	2	7	18	15	7	3	3	3	0	0	0	68
Over 8 and up to 13	6	16	12	1	30	20	10	4	5	5	8	3	0	120
Over 13 and up to 26	31	53	53	33	34	44	19	14	11	13	8	6	0	351
Over 26 and up to 39	5	23	24	13	50	41	7	10	5	8	4	8	0	198
Over 39 and up to 52	0	12	14	13	30	23	3	6	6	5	6	4	0	122
Over 52 and up to 65	0	4	13	7	18	11	4	3	3	2	3	6	0	74
Over 65 and up to 78	0	8	9	15	18	9	4	1	1	5	1	5	0	76
Over 78 and up to 104	0	1	4	9	16	12	4	5	5	10	5	6	0	77
Over 104 and up to 156	0	0	8	22	45	16	6	6	3	3	6	11	0	128
Over 156 and up to 208	0	0	0	8	30	3	1	3	4	5	8	7	0	69
Over 208 and up to 260	0	0	0	0	14	2	6	3	0	3	4	7	0	39
Over 260	0	0	0	0	15	11	5	4	2	5	12	12	0	66
Grand totals Females	58	148	152	143	416	239	96	78	67	85	75	79	0	1,637

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxation

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of people who would be taken out of tax, and the cost to the Exchequer, if personal allowances were increased by *(a)* indexation of 5·7 per cent. and *(b)* 5 per cent., 10 per cent., 15 per cent., and 20 per cent. above indexation in 1986-87.

Mr. Moore: The information is as follows:

Option	Full year cost (£ million)	Reduction in number of taxpayers *('000s)
Indexation	1,280	500
Indexation and a further 5 per cent. on allowances	2,330	1,050
Indexation and a further 10 per cent. on allowances	3,380	1,550
Indexation and a further 15 per cent. on allowances	4,380	2,000
Indexation and a further 20 per cent. on allowances	5,380	2,450

* Compared with 1985-86 allowance levels.

Raw Materials Importers (VAT)

Mr. Conway asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect on manufacturing competitiveness of the delay in refunding value added tax to raw material importers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Since the general withdrawal of the postponed accounting system for VAT on imports on 1 November 1984, my officials have kept me informed of the effect of the change on importers generally including those who import raw materials.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Higgins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Worthing of 12 March, he will give figures for each of the nine years before 1984-85 for discretionary increases in public expenditure above departmental plans made from the contingency reserve to individual Departments and any unused balances.

Mr. Lawson: The discretionary increases in public expenditure above departmental plans met from the contingency reserve for years before 1984-85 are shown in the table. It should be noted that because the contingency reserve was available only for discretionary increases, any unused balances were a poor guide to the under or overshoot of the planning total as a whole (which is shown in table 1.9 of the public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9702)).

£ million (rounded to nearest £5 million)

Department*	1979-80†	1980-81†	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84
MOD	10	—	425	370	—
FCO	30	10	—	30	25
European Community	25	—	—	135	—
MAFF	85	15	40	25	10
DTI	—	50	—	225	235
Energy	—	—	—	—	15
Employment	—	15	170	20	15
Transport	5	—	—	45	10
DOE	—	5	—	175	60
Home Office	5	—	30	20	20
DES	15	—	20	—	15
OAL	—	—	—	5	5
DHSS	205	20	35	330	195
Scotland	—	—	—	—	—
Wales	—	—	—	—	60
Northern Ireland	10	50	40	5	—
Chancellor's Departments	5	25	20	—	5
Other departments/ unallocable‡	115	15	5	15	10
Nationalised Industry EFLs ‖	—	750	360	—	—
Unused Balances	70	205	1,355	1,000	820
Total (Contingency Reserve)	880	1,160	2,500	2,400	1,500

* As appropriate for the year in question and not adjusted for subsequent classification changes.
† Survey prices for the appropriate year.
‡ Includes small departments and unallocable sums.
‖ Not allocated to sponsoring departments in this table.

Note:
* Figures for earlier years are not readily available in this format. For 1978-79, the aggregate call on the contingency reserve of £750 million was £710 million; for 1977-78, the comparable figures were were £750 million and £685 million (at 1977 survey prices).

Tax Threshold

Mr. Frank Field asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, expressing the tax threshold as 100 in

1955-56, he will measure the increase in the threshold at the latest available date for a single person, married couple and a married couple with two and four children.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 March 1986, c. *390*]: Information based on the Budget proposals for 1986-87 is in the table. Since child tax allowances were replaced by child benefit between 1977 and 1979, a comparison of tax thresholds may give an incomplete picture for families with children. The table therefore also shows "break even" points—that is the level of income at which net liability to tax would arise, treating child benefit (and family allowance) as an offset to income tax.

	Income tax thresholds				*Break even points*			
	1955-56		*1986-87*		*1955-56*		*1986-87*	
	At current prices £	*At 1986-87 prices** £	*At current prices* £	*Index (1955-56=100)*	*At current prices* £	*At 1986-87 prices** £	*At current prices* £	*Index (1955-56=100)*
Single	191	1,675	2,335	139	191	1,675	2,335	139
Married couple								
No children	320	2,805	3,655	130	320	2,805	3,655	130
Two children	556	4,875	3,655	75	709	6,215	6,190	100
Four children	772	6,765	3,655	54	1,119	9,805	8,725	89

* Assuming an increase of 3½ per cent. in the RPI between 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Savings Schemes (Advertising)

Mr. Freud asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the amount of money spent on advertising each of the different Government savings schemes together with a table of the interest paid on capital for each scheme.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 March 1986, c. *591*]: Estimated figures for the year ending 31 March 1986 for the savings schemes administered by the Department for National Savings are shown in the table:

	Advertising expenditure £ *million*	*Interest, index-linking or bonuses accrued; dividends or prizes paid* £ *million*
Savings Certificates	1·54	1,527
Income Bonds	2·67	402
Indexed-Income Bonds	0·26	—
Deposit Bonds	0·36	42
Investment Account	2·78	614
Ordinary Account	0·36	77
Yearly Plan	0·39	4
Premium Bonds	0·56	135
Save As You Earn	—	50
N.S. Stock Register	—	82
Total	8·92	2,933

Tax Allowances

Mr. Frank Field asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will express the value of personal tax allowances to a single person, married couple and two wage earners tax unit at each of the marginal rates of tax.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 March 1986, c. *283*]: Under the Budget proposals, the information for 1986-87 is as follows:

Value of personal allowances in 1986-87
(£ per annum)

Marginal tax rate (per cent.)	*Single person*	*Married couple (wife not working)*	*Married couple (wife working)*
29	677·15	1,059·95	1,737·10
40	934·00	1,462·00	2,396·00
45	1,050·75	1,644·75	2,695·50
50	1,167·50	1,827·50	2,995·00
55	1,284·25	2,010·25	3,294·50
60	1,401·00	2,193·00	3,594·00

SOCIAL SERVICES

Medical Appeal Tribunals

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many applications were made to chairmen of medical appeal tribunals for leave to appeal on a point of law to the Social Security Commissioners in each year from 1980 to 1985 *(a)* nationally, *(b)* in London south region and *(c)* in London north region; and, for the same years and areas, what numbers of applications were granted.

Mr. Major: The information is as follows:

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Applications received						
London south region	19	23	20	34	46	43
London north region	n/a	20	25	5	29	35
Great Britain	150	270	289	284	*286	*305
Applications granted						
London south region	2	1	2	—	2	1
London north region	n/a	2	4	1	8	3
Great Britain	16	33	32	34	*29	*52

* Excluding north-east region, for which figures are not available.
NA—not available.

Benefit Claimants

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to the answer of 12 February, *Official Report*, columns *489-90*, he will break down the total of social security claimants for 1985 into the categories *(a)* pensioners aged 80 years and over, *(b)* pensioners aged 60 to 79 years, *(c)* sick and disabled, *(d)* one-parent families, *(e)* low paid families, *(f)* unemployed families, *(g)* single people, *(h)* childless couples and *(i)* widows and others.

Mr. Major: More detailed information on the categories of supplementary benefit claimants in Leyton and Leytonstone is not available.

Details of the number of persons in receipt of supplementary benefit in December 1983 (the latest available information) in the categories requested, except low income families, is available nationally but not locally as follows:

*December 1983

	000's
Pensioners aged 80 years and over	444
Pensioners aged 60 to 79 years	1,206
Sick and disabled	241
One parent families	475
Unemployed families	461
Single people	3,329
Childless couples	536
Widows	15
Others	167

The number of low income families in receipt of family income supplement in December 1983† was 204,000.

* Annual Statistic Inquiry 1983.

† 10 per cent annual sample.

Single Payments

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the value and numbers of single payments of supplementary benefit from the Department of Health and Social Security offices in Coventry for the last five years.

Mr. Major: The following table sets out the total number of single payments made by local offices serving Coventry, and their value, since 1980 for years ending early in April.

	Coventry (East)		*Coventry (West)*	
	Number	*Amount (£)*	*Number*	*Amount (£)*
1980-81	4,181	194,182	2,210	109,566
1981-82	6,687	311,030	4,857	193,062
1982-83	7,785	416,523	5,392	294,716
1983-84	12,820	832,560	7,932	562,911
1984-85	18,041	1,211,256	11,511	666,175

Students (Benefit)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 27 February, *Official Report*, column *682*, about students and social security benefits, what he intends should be understood by the expression "privately rented accommodation".

Mr. Newton: In the context of the response to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) on 27 February at columns *682-83*, "privately rented accommodation" refers to accommodation other than university or college accommodation.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how the figures of 140,000 and 275,000 students, given in the answer of 27 February, *Official Report*, columns *682-83*, by the Minister of State for Social Security for the numbers who will, respectively, benefit or be adversely affected by the proposed changes to students' entitlement to welfare, were arrived at.

Mr. Newton: Estimates of the numbers of students likely to gain or lose from the Government's proposals to change certain aspects of their entitlement to supplementary benefit, unemployment benefit and housing benefit were based on the numbers signing on as unemployed, and the estimated numbers claiming housing benefit.

Employees (Accommodation)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many health authorities have submitted their action plans outlining their policy for accommodating employees in accordance with health circular (85)19.

Mr. Hayhoe: All but one.

Health Authorities (Computers)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the companies with which regional and district health authorities have had contracts for the supply of computer equipment valued at £50,000 or more in each of the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985, giving the numbers of contracts in each case and the total value in respect of each company.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not available centrally.

Mobility Allowance

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what theoretical or practical tests of mobility must be undergone by a person with only one lower limb, or with part of the lower limb missing, in order to establish his or her eligibility for mobility allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Entitlement to mobility allowance is related to walking ability and not to specific disabilities. The way in which walking ability is tested is entirely a matter for the examining doctor who, in making his assessment, takes account of any prostheses or aids used or which the person examined would be physically and mentally capable of using. If the hon. Member is aware of particular difficulties arising in connection with people who have a lower limb or part of a lower limb missing, I shall be pleased to look into them if he will let me have details.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people with only one lower limb, or

with part of one lower limb missing, have been refused mobility allowance in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* the United Kingdom as a whole for each of the last five years; and if the will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not available.

Abortions

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of the nominees of the proprietors of those private hospitals which are licensed to perform abortions after 20 weeks, gestation who met the Minister on 2 August 1985 to discuss late abortion.

Mr. Hayhoe: I suggest that my hon. Friend approach the proprietors direct. The meeting in question was not with Ministers but with the officials of my Department.

Mental Handicap (Manpower)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department is currently undertaking a manpower study in the field of mental handicap.

Mr. Whitney: In our examination of regional health authorities' strategic plans we look for evidence that they include estimates of manpower requirements and means of meeting those requirements in their planning and that they are planning community mental handicap services in collaboration with local authorities. A small sample of mental handicap wards were included in a departmental review of nursing skill-mix which is to be presented to the National Health Service Management Board. We are also considering the report of the community nursing review which was asked to study how resources could be used more effectively to improve the services available to client groups, including mentally handicapped people.

Local Office Staff

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his answer of 7 March, *Official Report*, column 322, he will published in the *Official Report* the number of additional social security local office staff to be allocated to (i) Greenock, (ii) Port Glasgow, (iii) Strathclyde and (iv) Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Major: The method of distributing the extra local office staff has still to be decided, so it is not possible at this stage to say how many extra staff Scotland and individual local offices will receive.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the amount of housing benefit owed by his Department on 31 December 1985 to the local authorities of Islington, Camden, Hackney, Sheffield and Bristol; and if he will give comparable figures for the same dates in 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Major: The Department pays subsidy to local authorities on their benefit and administration costs under the housing benefits scheme on the basis of final audited claims for each financial year. Payments on account of subsidy are made each month during the year on the basis of authorities' estimates of expenditure. No payments of subsidy were owed by the Department to any of the authorities mentioned on 31 December 1983, 1984 or 1985. Payments on account had also been made in the normal way.

Health Authorities (Cost Improvement)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why in the light of his policy on retention by district health authorities of benefits of cost improvement programmes, the Brent district health authority is not being permitted by the North-West Thames regional health authority to retain the full proceeds of its programme.

Mr. Whitney: Our policy on the local retention of cost improvement programmes was set out in my reply to the right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson) on 3 March, at column *61*. The application of this policy in the case of Brent district health authority is a matter for the North-West Thames regional health authority and that district.

Huddersfield DHA (Chairman)

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why the chairman of Huddersfield district health authority was informed by ministerial letter that he was not being re-appointed and later informed that he has been re-appointed.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret my mistake in sending the Huddersfield chairman a valedictory letter on 18 February. It was withdrawn the following day and I have apologised. I am glad that he has accepted my apology and my invitation to serve for a further term of four years. There is no truth in the suggestion that I understand has been made locally that the hon. Member's intervention influenced this matter in any way.

"New Earnings Survey"

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the data for the "New Earnings Survey" for 1983 on the numbers of poor persons and households.

Mr. Major: I understand that the hon. Member is referring to this Department's publication "Low Income Families". I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security to my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) on 4 March at column *122*.

Child Benefit

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the level at which child benefit would be set if, compared with the 1978-79 level, it were to maintain the increase in tax-free income of taxpayers with children at the same level as that of taxpayers without children.

Mr. Newton: For a married couple with children under age 11, the current level of child benefit would need to be £6·91 a child a week to match the November 1978 level of child benefit (revalued at November 1985 prices) plus child tax allowance at the 1978-79 level increased by a percentage equal to the increase in the tax allowance for married couples without children over the same period.

Hospital Services

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are his objectives on the provision of hospital services; how he is monitoring their effectiveness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Our policies for the hospital services remain as set out in "Care in Action" as amplified and extended by the annual planning guidelines issued to health authorities, including specific targets for priority service developments. We are also concerned to secure equality of access to services and to improve the efficiency with which resources are used, through better management. We monitor the effectiveness of services in a range of ways, including regular reports on aspects of performance, statistical returns of activity levels and annual reviews with regional health authorities.

Eye Specialists (Waiting Times)

Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the national average waiting period for an appointment with eye specialists following referrals by general practitioners; what is the average waiting period for the South-West health region and in the Plymouth health district; and what were the corresponding figures in June 1979.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend the information. Information on waiting time for out-patient appointments is not collected centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to write to the chairmen of the South-Western regional health authority and the Plymouth district health authority who may be able to provide the local information requested.

Mr. Michael Martin

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has taken any steps to monitor the use of emergency medication in the special hospital system; and if he intends to accept the guidelines for prescribing medication set out in the Ritchie report.

Mr. Whitney: For reasons which were explained fully when my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) published Miss Ritchie's report, her recommendation regarding advance prescribing was not accepted. Fresh guidelines to medical and nursing staff in Broadmoor hospital about prescribing practice had already been issued, however, before Miss Ritchie's report was received. Each of the special hospitals now has up-to-date guidance consistent with good modern practice for dealing with difficult situations.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in the light of the conclusions and recommendations of the Ritchie report, he has any plans to improve the quality of care within the special hospital system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I am concerned constantly to maintain and to improve the quality of care provided for patients in special hospitals. We have regular exchanges with the local managers of the special hospitals and have invested substantial resources in those hospitals aimed at ensuring improvements both in standards of care and in the quality of life of patients and of the staff who work in the hospitals. The particular matters raised in Miss Ritchie's report were dealt with when the report was received and in advance of its receipt. I look to the local boards which are now to be introduced to continue and develop this work, as the Rampton hospital review board has done.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in the light of the Ritchie report on the death of Michael Martin, he has any plans to lay down guidelines to ensure that relatives are fully informed about the condition and treatment of patients in secure mental hospitals.

Mr. Whitney: The need to provide advice and information to relatives about the condition and treatment of patients is a normal and fully accepted responsibility of staff in special hospitals, as in all other hospitals. Staff recognise that relatives may find it very hard to come to terms with the seriousness of a patient's mental condition. In addition to contacts between relatives and medical and nursing staff, each special hospital has its own social work department, which has a particular concern with maintaining, and sometimes restoring, contact with families where this is appropriate. The difficulties which arose in the case of Mr. Martin have been fully discussed between officers of the Department and the managers of Broadmoor hospital with a view to ensuring that similar problems will not recur.

Special Hospital System

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the aims and the purpose of the special hospital system.

Mr. Whitney: The aims and purpose of the special hospitals are to provide care and treatment for patients detained under the Mental Health Act who require to be treated in conditions of special security on account of their dangerous, violent or criminal propensities, as required by section 4 of the National Health Service Act 1977.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that information is made available in appropriate languages to patients in mental hospitals and their relatives whose first language is not English.

Mr. Whitney: I have nothing to add to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving) on 11 February at column *430*.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the relative levels of misdiagnosis in secure and other mental hospitals, respectively, as between *(a)* black people and *(b)* white people; and what steps he is taking to seek to reduce the level of misdiagnosis in both absolute and relative terms.

Mr. Whitney: I have no reason to believe that there are significant problems of wrong diagnosis by doctors working in mental hospitals in this country, either generally or in relation to people of different racial origins. If the hon. Member has evidence of such problems, no doubt he will bring it to notice. The condition of patients being treated in special hospitals will usually have been diagnosed before their admission by doctors not employed at those hospitals, often by several such doctors. The

consultant staff working in the special hospitals undertake their own diagnosis in the knowledge of the patient's medical history, including previous diagnosis.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received as to the relative quality of medical treatment given in secure and other mental hospitals, respectively, to *(a)* black people and *(b)* white people; and what action he has taken in consequence.

Mr. Whitney: I have no reason to believe that doctors working in mental hospitals in this country are either insensitive to ethnic considerations where these are clearly relevant, or make any distinction in the quality of their treatment of patients on account of the patient's racial origins.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many single payments were made from the Huyton office of his Department during each of the last five years and in 1986 to date.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 March 1986, c. *570*]: The number f single payments made from the Huyton local office in the years since April 1982 are:

	Number
1982-83	7,882
1983-84	12,634
1984-85	16,910
1985-86*	14,566

* up to 11 February 1986

Information is not available for a complete year prior to 1982-83.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Standing and Select Committees

Mr. Craigen asked the Lord Privy Seal how many members in the present parliament have not served on any Standing Committee or Select Committee of the House.

Mr. Biffen: As on 20 March, 27 Members have not served on any Standing Committee or Select Committee of the House in the present Parliament. The total includes Mr. Speaker, the Chairman and Deputy Chairmen of Ways and Means, as well as three members of the Chairmen's Panel.

Mail (Postmarking)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Lord Privy Seal if, pursuant to his answer of 17 March to the hon. Member for Leicester, East, he will state the reasons why it is not practicable for mail posted in the parliamentary outbuildings to be brought into the House for postmarking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I am advised that the House of Commons Post Office can deal efficiently with the amount of mail posted within the Palace of Westminster; but the level of Post Office accommodation within the House is such that additional mail from the outbuildings could not be handled. The passage of mail from the outbuildings direct to the south-west mechanised letter office has proved a satisfactory service over a number of years. However I am aware that this mail does not receive the House of Commons postmark.

Food Preferences

Mr. Corbyn asked the Lord Privy Seal what information he has of the food preferences of Members of Parliament, staff and visitors to the Palace of Westminster and as to how many are *(a)* vegetarians, *(b)* vegans, *(c)* in need of a special diet for health reasons or *(d)* in need of a special diet for religious reasons.

Mr. Biffen: Comprehensive information of this nature is not available; but Members may express their views on existing arrangements to the General Manager of the Refreshment Department or to the Catering Sub-Committee.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will take steps to ensure the presence of *(a)* vegetarian, *(b)* vegan, *(c)* Asian, *(d)* West Indian and *(e)* kosher food in the dining areas of the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Biffen: A daily vegetarian menu is available. Vegan, Asian, West Indian and kosher food can be made available by prior arrangement with the General Manager of the Refreshment Department.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Lord Privy Seal how often vegetarian dishes are provided in the dining facilities within the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Biffen: Vegetarian dishes are provided every day and a special menu is displayed on each table accordingly.

Facilities (Public Visitors)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will take steps to ensure that the public visiting the Palace of Westminster *(a)* are able to queue under cover in Westminster Hall, *(b)* have full access for all types of disability and *(c)* can use refreshment facilities that do not require the presence of a Member.

Mr. Biffen: *(a)* The Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee of the Services Committee recently reviewed access arrangements to the Palace of Westminster for visitors. In the course of this review the Sub-Committee considered the proposal that Westminster Hall should be used for queuing, but decided against any change in current arrangements; *(b)* disabled persons are able to visit the Palace of Westminster, and any special arrangements that may be necessary are made by the Serjeant at Arms' Office; *(c)* the pressure on refreshment facilities within the Palace of Westminster is such that I can foresee no relaxation of the present regulations whereby a Member may accompany two persons to the Strangers' Cafeteria and may take three persons to the Members' Cafeteria.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Ministerial Duties

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northen Ireland how many nights each of the Ministers in his Department spent in Northern Ireland during each of the months of December 1985 and January and February 1986.

Mr. Tom King: The information is as follows:

	December 1985	January 1986	February 1986
Secretary of State	8	7	7
Dr. Rhodes Boyson	7	8	3
Mr. Nicholas Scott	9	5	9
Lord Lyell	6	8	7
Mr. Richard Needham	15	10	10
Dr. Brian Mawhinney	—	—	2

Sewage Works, Newtownbreda

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many tenders for the new sewage works at Newtownbreda in Castlereagh borough have been received from firms in Northern Ireland, Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland, respectively; what was the price of each tender; which tender has been accepted; what precautions are being taken to ensure the safety of employees during the period of contract; and whether the successful tenderer has signed the Fair Employment Agency register for employers.

Mr. Needham: For the civil engineering works contract for the Newtownbreda sewage treatment works extension, nine tenders were received from companies with registered offices in Northern Ireland, none from companies with registered offices in Great Britain and one from a company with a registered office in the Republic of Ireland. Tenders ranged in value from £2,947,000 to £3,694,000. The lowest tender was accepted and this was submitted by a company with a registered office in Northern Ireland. The safety of employees during a contract is primarily the responsibility of the contractor. The successful tenderer is registered by the Fair Employment Agency. Tenders have been invited for the supply and installation of mechanical and electrical plant at the sewage treatment works extension. Tenders are currently under consideration and it would be in breach of commercial confidence to disclose details of tenders received until the contract has been awarded.

Assembly

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the daily cost of operating the Northern Ireland Assembly, including the salaries of both members and staff.

Mr. Tom King: The average daily cost of operating the Northern Ireland Assembly, based on the total forecast expenditure for the financial year 1985-86, is approximately £7,900.

Education and Library Boards

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has had from education and library boards concerning budget proposals for 1986-87.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have received deputations from three of the Education and Library Boards and discussed with them the implications of their 1986-87 financial allocations.

Elections

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps were taken by Her Majesty's Government to monitor the numbers of electors unable to vote due to lack of identification in the 1985 local government elections and in the 1986 by-elections; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Ministers received reports and representations from a wide range of Northern Ireland politicians, the chief Electoral Officer and others involved in the electoral process. There is no evidence that turn-out was significantly affected by the introduction of the specified document requirement.

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken since 1985 to inform the public about new requirements for voting in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: In the weeks preceding the Northern Ireland district council elections in May 1985, the Government mounted an extensive public information campaign to advise electors of the need to produce a specified document before receiving a ballot paper. The campaign included distribution of an explanatory leaflet to all Northern Ireland households; the provision of a further 100,000 leaflets and posters in public buildings and offices; frequent broadcasts on local radio and television; and advertisments in all Northern Ireland newspapers. A further campaign was mounted before the Parliamentary by-elections on 23 January 1986. On both occasions, explanations of the new voting requirements were also included in the Chief Electoral Officer's pre-election publicity campaign.

Family Credit Scheme

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much families in Northern Ireland will lose through the ending of school meals for those receiving family credit under the social security proposals.

Mr. Needham: Under the proposals for social security reform, the cash equivalent of free school meals will be consolidated into the child credits in family credit. The overall effect on expenditure will therefore be neutral. The effect on individual families will depend on whether or not they are claiming free school meals and on the rates of benefit applicable when family credit is introduced in April 1988.

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much families in Northern Ireland will benefit by reason of the proposed family credit scheme in the social security proposals.

Mr. Needham: As it is the Government's intention that the principle of parity with Great Britain should remain the basis for provision of social security in Northern Ireland, it follows that the impact of the proposed reform on low income families will be generally the same in Northern Ireland as in Great Britain. I regret that detailed figures on the effect on families are not available.

Health Expenditure

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of health spending in Northern Ireland on an annual basis since 1979 is attributable to *(a)* demographic changes and *(b)* technological changes.

Mr. Needham: It is estimated that the pressure on resources arising from demographic change in the health and personal social services from 1979-80 to 1984-85 was 0·8 per cent. per annum on average or 4·4 per cent. over the period. It is not possible to make an accurate estimate in respect of technological change in Northern Ireland, but on the basis of work done elsewhere in the United Kingdom it is likely to be between 0·5 per cent. and 1·0 per cent. The real increase in resources from 1979-80 along with efficiency savings in recent years has been more than enough to cope with both demographic and technological pressures.

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what have been the percentage and real spending increases of expenditure in the health service in Northern Ireland for *(a)* hospitals and *(b)* community health services, excluding central management, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Needham: The following table contains the information requested.

(a) Expenditure on hospital services (gross)—£ million

	Cash	Percentage increase over previous year	Cash adjusted by GDP deflator	Percentage increase over previous year
1979-80	200·6	—	305·6	—
1980-81	256·5	27·9	329·0	7·7
1981-82	286·4	11·7	334·0	1·5
1982-83	309·4	8·0	337·2	1·0
1983-84	331·8	7·2	346·0	2·6
1984-85	351·2	5·8	351·2	1·5

(b) Expenditure on community health services (gross)—£ million

1979-80	19·5	—	29·7	—
1980-81	26·3	34·9	33·7	13·5
1981-82	28·9	9·9	33·7	Nil
1982-83	31·9	10·4	34·8	3·3
1983-84	35·1	10·0	36·6	5·2
1984-85	38·2	8·8	38·2	4·4

Home Helps

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in the light of the policy of moving patients out of hospital and into the community in Northern Ireland, what additional expenses and funding are envisaged for home helps.

Mr. Needham: The Department of Health and Social Services, in its strategic planning guidelines, has recently asked health and social services boards to include in their area strategic plans an assessment of the implications for community services, including the home help service, of a shift in the balance of care away from hospitals. In advance of the receipt of boards' plans it is not possible to specify what additional resources will be required in any part of the services.

Payment for Debt Act

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many public employees are currently having deductions made from their pay under the Payment for Debt Act; what was the total of deductions in February for public employees; and what percentage this represented of their total net earnings.

Dr. Boyson: The available information is in respect of the quarter ended 31 December 1985, when 1,991 public sector employees had deductions of £439,000 made from their pay; information on earnings is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Social Security Bill

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what will be the total potential loss to those in receipt of state earnings related pension scheme benefits in Northern Ireland in the year 2000 if the provisions of the Social Security Bill are extended to Northern Ireland, assuming present demographic trends continue.

Mr. Needham: I shall reply to the right hon. and learned Member as soon as possible.

Community Care

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, in the light of the policy of moving patients out of hospital and into the community in Northern Ireland, what facilities will be provided in the community in advance of the closure of hospital facilities; and what steps will be taken to ensure that the families of those concerned will be consulted and to discover if they are satisfied with arrangements for the care of the former hospital patients.

Mr. Needham: I shall reply to the right hon. and learned Member as soon as possible.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 21 March 1986

WALES

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps have been taken by his Department to monitor the response of health authorities to the report by the all-Wales health management efficiency group on cervical cancer in Wales, in regard to its recommendations for joint committees, for screening managers and specialist follow-up staff to be appointed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The report of the management efficiency group was published at the end of February and its recommendations are complementary to those of the joint NHS-Welsh Office working party report of July 1985. A circular is to be issued shortly on the administration of the cervical cytology screening service and this will advise those health authorities which have not already taken steps to implement the recommendations of the joint report that they should now do so. It will also advise authorities to have regard to the management efficiency group's recommendations in drawing up their schemes.

The NHS directorate will be monitoring the authorities' progress in developing its cervical cytology screening services as part of the annual review process.

Student Grants

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state the number of discretionary grants approved for *(a)* those students enrolled in Welsh universities and *(b)* those students enrolled in Welsh polytechnics in each of the last five years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Discretionary awards are the responsibility of individual local education authorities. Neither the Welsh Office nor the Department of Education and Science collects this information.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Land Rover

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the implications of a possible sale of Land Rover to General Motors for the prospects for an order worth approximately £50 million from the Australian Government for Land Rover vehicles.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 March 1986, c. *191*]: I have not received any representations about the implications of the possible sale of Land Rover for this prospective order. However one informal request for clarification on certain points was received from the Australian High Commission.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Local Government Services

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) under what conditions commissioners will be appointed to provide essential local government services in certain district councils in Northern Ireland;

(2) what special security provisions commissioners appointed to provide essential local government services in certain district councils in Northern Ireland will receive to protect them from possible terrorist acts;

(3) how commissioners to provide essential local government services in certain district councils in Northern Ireland will be chosen.

Mr. Needham: Commissioners will only be appointed as a measure of last resort where there is a threat to the district council statutory services and jobs caused by the action of councillors. In such circumstances persons with relevant skills and experience in public administration would be considered and appropriate security arrangements would be made in the light of police advice. It would not be in the interests of security to disclose details.

Medical Cards

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many medical cards have been issued by the Northern Ireland Central Services Agency since 1973; how many of these were of the format produced by the former issuing authority prior to 1973; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Since 1 October 1973 an estimated 1,750,000 medical cards have been issued by the Northern Ireland Central Services Agency. It is not known how many of these were of the format produced by the Northern Ireland General Health Services Board, the issuing authority prior to 1 October 1973.

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons were issued with new medical cards in *(a)* each of the five weeks preceding the 1985 local government elections, *(b)* each of the five weeks preceding the 1986 by-elections and *(c)* an average week in 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The approximate numbers of medical cards issued during these periods are as follows: *(a)* 65,000; *(b)* 30,000; *(c)* 2,400.
These totals include first time registrations, amendments to previous cards and replacements.

Social Security Bill

Mr. Archer (Warley West): asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what will be the total potential loss to those in respect of state earnings related pension scheme benefits in Northern Ireland in the year 2000 if the provisions of the Social Security Bill are extended to Northern Ireland, assuming present demographic trends continue.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 March 1986]: As the right hon. and learned Member is aware the proposed changes in the state earnings related pension scheme will not start to take effect until the year 2000.. There will therefore be no loss to those already receiving

SERPS. The 10 year phasing in of the change from 25 per cent. to 20 per cent. of earnings will begin to have effect from 6 April 2000 and the rate will reduce by half a per cent. a year from that date. The loss to anybody retiring in the year 2000 would be insignificant.

Community Care

Mr. Archer (Warley West): asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, in the light of the policy of moving patients out of hospital and into the community in Northern Ireland, what facilities will be provided in the community in advance of the closure of hospital facilities; and what steps will be taken to ensure that the families of those concerned will be consulted and to discover if they are satisfied with arrangements for the care of the former hospital patients.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 March 1986]: In recent years, funding of community services in Northern Ireland has shown a greater percentage increase than that of the hospital services. It will be for Health and Social Services Boards to decide, in drawing up their area strategic and operational plans what further developments are required in furtherance of the policy of providing a greater proportion of overall health care in the community.

No change is envisaged in existing procedures for the transfer of patients from hospital, under which arrangements are made in consultation with the patient's family and GP for appropriate continuing care to be provided in the community.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Welsh Business

Mr. Best asked the Lord Privy Seal if, pursuant to his answer of 4 March, *Official Report*, column *96*, he will list the dates and the topics of each of the Welsh debates in 1979-80 and in 1984-85, respectively, indicating which of them were initiated *(a)* in Government time, *(b)* in time made available to the Opposition and *(c)* by private Members.

Mr. Biffen: The information is as follows:

Debate	*Date*
For session 1979-80:	
Welsh Affairs (G)	23 May 1979
Wales Act 1979 Repeal (G)	26 June 1979
Nursery Education (Clwyd) (P)	18 July 1979
Bombing Ranges, Pembray, Dyfed (P)	9 November 1979
Welsh Affairs (G)	15 January 1980
Coal Industry in South Wales (P)	4 February 1980
Welsh Affairs (G)	4 February 1980
Bernard Wardle factory (Caernarvon) (P)	21 March 1980
Treforest Skillcentre (P)	15 May 1980
Wales (the Berwyns) (P)	16 June 1980
Prison Officers' Houses, South Wales (P)	3 November 1980
For session 1984-85:	
Welsh Rate Support Grant Report 1985-86 (G)	16 January 1985
Adult Education in Wales (P)	31 January 1985
Welsh Affairs (G)	28 February 1985
North Wales Rail Services (P)	1 July 1985
Rural Communities in Wales (O)	4 June 1985
Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary (No. 2) Report 1984-85 (G)	16 July 1985

Since the answer of 4 March 1986, the following debates have also been identified:

Debate	*Date*
For session 1979-80:	
Helenor Bye (P)	27 November 1979
Development Board for Rural Wales Order (G)	8 February 1980
Textile Workers in Flint (P)	9 July 1980
For session 1984-85:	
Dairy Farming in South West Wales (Consolidated Fund) (P)	19-20 December 1984
Sewers and Surface Drainage (Wales) (P)	19 March 1985
St. John's Colliery, Maesteg (P)	23 April 1985
Courtaulds (Cardiff) (P)	2 May 1985
The River Wye (P)	22 May 1985
Toxic Waste Disposal in Gwent (P)	2 July 1985
Welsh Language and Social Services (Consolidated Fund) (P)	24-25 July 1985
Closure of Blackmill Hospital (P)	26 July 1985

(G)=in Government time.
(O)=in Opposition time.
(P)=in Private Members' time (including daily Adjournment debates).
Note:
The above list does *not* include debates on various stages of legislation, ten minute rule bills, money resolutions, SO 10 applications, and PNQs, but does include inter alia daily adjournment debates, debates on Statutory Instruments, and Consolidated Fund Bill debates.

Mr. Best asked the Lord Privy Seal what criteria he applies in deciding whether to allocate Government time for debates on matters specifically relating to Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: It is traditional for there to be a sessional debate on Welsh affairs. The Standing Orders of the House also provide that the Welsh Grand Committee may also consider matters relating specifically to Wales, which are referred to it. Arrangements for such debates are made following discussion through the usual channels.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Soviet Citizens (Residence Permits)

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Soviet citizens have been granted temporary British residence permits *(a)* during 1985 and *(b)* so far in 1986; and for what periods of time.

Mr. Waddington: The readily available information relates to the numbers of citizens of the USSR admitted to the United Kingdom analysed by the purpose of their journey. Figures for 1984 are given in table 1 of "Control of Immigration Statistics United Kingdom 1984" (Cmnd. 9844). It is planned to publish the corresponding figures for 1985 in the summer.

Homosexuality

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many men are currently imprisoned in the United Kingdom for consenting homosexual acts with males between the ages of 16 and 21 years; and what are the minimum and maximum sentences being served by such men.

Mr. Mellor: Information available centrally, which may be incomplete, is for England and Wales only and relates to offenders over the age of 21 given a custodial sentence for a consenting homosexual offence with males between the ages of 16 and 21. In 1984 33 offenders were so sentenced; the shortest sentence imposed was three weeks and the longest four and a half years; the average

sentence was almost 20 months. Corresponding information on those serving custodial sentences is not recorded centrally.

Prisoners

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were *(a)* two to a cell and *(b)* three to a cell on the most recent convenient date.

Mr. Mellor: On 9 February there were 12,854 males and 292 females held two to a cell and 4,002 males and no females held three to a cell in prison custody in England and Wales.

Suppliers (Payment)

Mr. Ottaway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time it takes his Department to pay suppliers of goods and services to his Department.

Mr. Hurd: The Home Office payment procedure comprises two stages under which invoices are *(a)* initially received from suppliers by the headquarters section of the outstation which ordered the goods or services, and where, after being checked for accuracy and conformity with the orders, the invoices are authorised for payment and forwarded to the Office's accounts branch for *(b)* the preparation of payable orders under computerised central payment arrangements. The accounts branch daily receives more than 1,000 invoices for payment. The time taken by the accounts branch for examination and payment is normally about 6-10 working days, but following recent relocation of the branch is at present approximately 10-15 working days. An average time taken for the whole two-stage procedure could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Shops Bill

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many of those letters received to date by his Department concerning the Shops Bill [*Lords*] have supported the status quo;

(2) how many of those letters received to date by his Department opposed to the complete deregulation of Sunday trading have suggested alternative reforms;

(3) how many of those letters received by his Department opposed to complete deregulation of Sunday trading that have put forward alternative reforms have suggested that *(a)* local authorities take the decisions as to which shops may open on Sunday, *(b)* that shops may only open to sell goods that are needed, *(c)* that opening be limited to shops of a certain size, *(d)* that opening be limited to shops of a certain type or *(e)* that the hours that shops may open on a Sunday be limited.

Mr. Waddington: The letters received by the Department opposed to the Shops Bill have not been analysed in the detailed ways requested by my hon. Friend and I regret that such a precise analysis could be attempted only at disproportionate cost. In general, however, relatively few of the letters opposing the Bill have suggested alternative reforms, and among those that have, there has been no consensus, nor any markedly greater degree of support for one alternative as opposed to another.

Juries

Mr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the terms of the Juries Act 1984 dealing with the ineligibility for jury service of certain persons convicted of criminal offences are implemented; and what checks are made to seek to ensure that ineligible people do not sit on juries.

Mr. Mellor: The provisions disqualifying persons with previous convictions from jury service are explained to potential jurors in the jury summons and they are required to declare any disqualification. In addition, an oral explanation is normally given by a court official to those summoned and a person who thinks he may be disqualified is given the opportunity of consulting the official. Thereafter, enforcement of the criminal law is a matter for the chief officer of police concerned. The annex to Home Office Circular 81/1980, a copy of which is in the Library, contains recommendations by the Association of Chief Police Officers on when a check of names of potential jurors should be made against criminal records. One of the criteria is that there is reason to believe that attempts are being made to circumvent the statutory provisions excluding disqualified persons from service on a jury, including any case when there is reason to believe that a particular juror may be disqualified.

Data Protection Act 1984

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of the registration process under the Data Protection Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The Data Protection registrar had received approximately 14,500 applications for registration by Wednesday, 19 March. The registrar is monitoring the effect of his current advertising campaign, and expects the majority of applications to be received towards the end of the initial registration period, which expires on 10 May.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Stamp Duty

Mr. Cash asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will clarify the scope of his Budget proposals relating to stamp duty.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Following announcement of the stamp duty proposals on Budget day, consultation with financial institutions and others concerned has indicated that certain technical changes should be made to ensure that the proposals operate in accordance with the intentions as announced. In response to representations, the Government therefore proposes to make the following changes.

My right hon. Friend announced that stamp duty would in future be payable on transfers of certain loan stocks. As the Inland Revenue press release issued on 18 March explained, this charge is not intended to apply to loans raised by various international organisations in respect of which the United Kingdom is under a treaty obligation to provide an exemption. The Resolution (no.36) giving temporary statutory effect to this proposal does not exempt certain loans raised by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Inter-American

Development Bank, the Asian Developmemt Bank and the African Development Bank. A revised version of the Resolution has accordingly been tabled today which ensures that such loans continue to be exempt.

My right hon. Friend also announced that there would be a charge of 5 per cent. on the conversion of United Kingdom shares into depositary receipts with immediate effect from 19 March. The Resolution covering this proposal is intended to apply to nominee companies which hold shares in connection with a bank's depositary receipt business. Representations have, however, been received suggesting that the Resolutions (nos.31 & 32) could also apply to certain nominee companies which hold securities for other purposes, and this also affects the Resolution (no.33) covering the related proposal to impose the same rate of duty on transfers of shares to certain clearing houses.

The Government are, therefore, withdrawing the appropriate Resolutions dealing with stamp duty on depositary receipts and transfers to clearing houses. Consultations are continuing, and amended provisions will accordingly be brought forward in due course. Meanwhile, however, the stamp duty reserve tax Resolution (no.40) remains in place. These changes do not therefore affect the Budget proposal for a charge at 5 per cent. from 19 March on the conversion of United Kingdom shares into depositary receipts. This charge also applies where shares are transferred into settlement systems which enable United Kingdom shares to be bought and sold without payment of stamp duty.

Taxation

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the costs of re-introducing a reduced rate band of income tax at 25 per cent. on *(a)*the first £750 of taxable income and *(b)* an amount of taxable income equivalent to £750 in 1979-80 uprated in line with personal allowances to 1986-87.

Mr. Moore: The costs would be *(a)* about £850 million and *(b)* about £1,620 million, in a full year at 1986-87 income levels.

Mr. Rooker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the comparison between the yield in real terms in 1978-79 and what he is now proposing for 1986-87 in *(a)* direct taxes including national insurance and *(b)* indirect taxes;

(2) what is the estimated yield from all sources of taxation including excise and other duties for 1986-87; what was the comparable yield for 1978-79 revalued at 1986-87 prices; and if he will publish a breakdown by categories of the real increase in taxes between 1978-79 and 1986-87 similar to that in his answer of 29 March 1985, *Official Report*, column *370;*

(3) if he will construct an index with 1978-79 equalling 100, of the changes in the level of income tax and national insurance contributions for each subsequent year for a taxpayer on *(a)* half, *(b)* two thirds, *(c)* average, *(d)* five times and *(e)* 10 times average earnings for households where the taxpayer is (i) single, (ii) married, no children, (iii) married with two children and (iv) married with four children, in all cases assuming the wife does not work.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

District Valuers Office, Port Talbot

Mr. John Morris asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will reconsider the proposal to close the district valuers office at Port Talbot.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Mr. Bob Edwards asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will consult the European Economic Community Council about additional measures to put pressure on South Africa to end apartheid.

Mrs. Chalker: Foreign Ministers of the Twelve regularly discuss developments in South Africa and have agreed to keep the situation there under close review.

South Africa (Conference)

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the names of those delegates attending the conference on South Africa to be held at Wilton park, Sussex, commencing on Sunday 23 March, together with those whom they are representing.

Mrs. Chalker: Wilton park is largely financed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. However the institution is free to choose its own subjects for discussion and to invite the speakers and participants it wishes. Academic independence and integrity are guaranteed by an International Advisory Council of OECD Ambassadors and an Academic Council of distinguished Britons. All discussion is off the record. It follows that a decision whether or not to disclose the names of participants attending their conferences rests with Wilton park.

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he or any member of Her Majesty's Government intends to address the conference on South Africa at Wilton park, Sussex, commencing on Sunday 23 March.

Mrs. Chalker: No member of the Government has been invited to address the conference at Wilton park. Foreign and Commonwealth officials will be present at the conference.

African National Congress

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what factors he took into account in deciding to differentiate between Ministers of the Crown and officials of his Department in Her Majesty's Government's policy towards contacts with members of the African National Congress; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The decision to establish contact with the African National Congress reflected a concern to promote a suspension of violence in South Africa and a genuine dialogue between all the parties concerned. In the circumstances it was decided that contact at official level was appropriate.

DEFENCE

Departmental Land

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Defence which land in Lincolnshire is owned, or leased, by his Department; what is the total acreage of this land; what sites it includes; and what proposals are being considered for disposal of any of it.

Mr. Lee: The Ministry of Defence owns or leases approximately 26,500 acres of land in Lincolnshire and South Humberside. The principal sites are:

Beckingham Army Training Area
Fulbeck Army Training Area
Kirton-in-Lindsey Barracks
Prince William of Gloucester Barracks, Grantham
RAF Barkston Heath
RAF Binbrook
RAF Coningsby
RAF Cranwell
RAF Digby
RAF Doona Nook
RAF Holbeach
RAF Nocton Hall
RAF North Coates
RAF Scampton
RAF Swinderby
RAF Theddlethorpe
RAF Waddington
RAF Wainfleet

plus 25 minor sites of small or negligible acreage.

There are 681 acres at Cranwell, 140 acres at Theddlethorpe, 64 married quarters at Binbrook, 79 married quarters at Nocton hall and 76 married quarters at Waddington with the Property Services Agency for disposal. No further major disposals are planned in Lincolnshire, but Fulbeck is one of four sites under consideration by NIREX for the disposal of low level nuclear waste. At this stage they ony have a licence for exploratory drilling.

Nimrod Project

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many amendments there have been to the original requirements laid down for the British Nimrod advanced early warning project.

Mr. Norman Lamont: There has been one amendment to the Royal Air Force's current airborne early warning requirement since it was endorsed in 1975: the need for an air-to-air refuelling capability was introduced in 1983.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

National Advisory Body

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he intends to meet the directors of the polytechnics in England and Wales to discuss the recommendations of the National Advisory Body's 1987-88 planning exercise.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would carefully consider a request for such a meeting were one to be made. However, recommendations arising from the National Advisory Body's 1987-88 planning exercise will not be adopted by the NAB committee nor submitted to my right hon. Friend until December 1986.

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the National Advisory Body's 1987-88 planning exercise.

Mr. Walden: Preliminary plans for the disposition of academic provision in the public sector of higher education in 1987-88 are being drawn up by the NAB secretariat and will be sent to institutions for consultation on 4 April 1986. In the light of the comments received from institutions, and of the resources available for public sector higher education in 1987-88, which will not be announced until the autumn, the National Advisory Body will make final recommendations to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about student numbers in the public sector, and the associated distribution of the advanced further education capped pool and voluntary sector quantum, in December 1986.

Polytechnics (Speeches)

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any intention of removing from the governing bodies of polytechnics the power to exercise control over invitations to speak on polytechnic property.

Mr. Walden: This must be seen as an aspect of the day-to-day management of an institution, and as such the responsibility of the director of a polytechnic for which he is accountable to the governors. They in turn carry responsibility for the general conduct of the institution. My right hon. Friend has no present plan to alter this situation.

Education (Amendment) Act 1986

Mr. Ray Powell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to meet the Association of County Councils to discuss the implementation of the Education (Amendment) Act 1986.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend plans to meet the Association of County Councils and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities after Easter to discuss various matters of common concern.

Parental Choice

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about Her Majesty's Government's policy towards parental choice in education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I received many interesting suggestions from my hon. Friends during the debate on 13 March at columns 1159-1202 and set out the present position when I replied to it.

The Government aim to maximise parental choice and, at the same time, to secure cost-effective provision. The Education Act 1980 embodied new and generally welcome arrangements, which continue in force, towards these ends.

Parental choice is enhanced by improvements in the quality of school provision. The Government's broad-ranging policies to secure this were set out in the White Paper "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469) published last March. In particular, parental influence on schools is to be increased by the reconstitution of governing bodies and other measures, as in the Bill currently before Parliament.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how the additional funds that he is making available to improve teachers' pay over the next four years will be made up; how much will be made available each year; what steps he has taken to seek to ensure that the teaching unions understand what is being offered; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: I announced last August that additional provision would be made for teachers' pay in England and Wales if a satisfactory agreement could be reached on the salary structure and the definition of teachers' duties. The additional provision would be for up to £200 million in 1986-87, rising in broadly equal steps to a maximum of £450 million in 1989-90. £40 million a year out of this sum is now being devoted to new arrangements for midday supervision. I have no doubt that the leaders of the teaching unions understand the Government's conditional offer. As for their members, I do not employ them but my colleagues and I have on numerous occasions sought to publicise the Government's position.

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were teachers' salaries in real terms in *(a)* 1981 and *(b)* 1986; and if he will give current comparable figures.

Sir Keith Joseph: Figures for the average salary of teachers are available only up to 1984. To provide an illustrative comparison for the years in question, I set out below the movement in the salary paid to primary and secondary teachers in England and Wales at the top of scale 1 (excluding those entitled to be paid on an extended scale as good honours graduates). In April 1981 such teachers were paid £7,317 a year which, increased by the rise in the retail price index up to April 1985, equates to some £9,361. Upon full implementation of the 1985 pay settlement at 31 March 1986 such teachers will receive £9,285 a year. There has as yet been no pay settlement for 1986.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what money has been committed to date by his Department on the general certificate of secondary education; and how much he expects local authorities to contribute thereto.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Department is already making a substantial contribution to the programme of in-service training for the GCSE of £9·5 million. In answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) on 13 March at column *542*, my right hon. Friend said that he will be making available a further £200,000 to the GCSE examining groups to enable the provision of further training seminars. For books and equipment for the GCSE, my right hon. Friend also announced on 13 March that he proposed supporting £20 million of expenditure by education support grant over the years 1986-87 and 1987-88 to help secondary schools purchase necessary additional books and equipment. This will allow local education authorities to increase expenditure in these areas but precise demands will vary between schools and local education authorities.

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the timetable for the introduction of the general certificate of secondary education was decided; and what representations were received from teachers' unions at that time.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend annnounced the timetable for the introduction of the GCSE in a statement to the House on 20 June 1984 at columns 303-4. No representations were received from teachers' associations at that time.

Pupil-teacher Ratios

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average teacher-pupil ratio *(a)* at present, *(b)* five years ago and *(c)* 10 years ago in (i) secondary schools in England, (ii) secondary schools in Oxfordshire, (iii) primary schools in England and (iv) primary schools in Oxfordshire.

Mr. Dunn: The pupil-teacher ratios in maintained schools in Oxfordshire and England in January 1976, 1981 and 1985 are given below:

	Oxfordshire		*England*	
	Primary schools	*Secondary schools*	*Primary schools*	*Secondary schools*
1976	24·0	17·1	24·0	17·0
1981	24·7	17·7	22·6	16·6
1985	23·9	17·2	22·2	16·1

University of Wales

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to how many academic staff posts have been lost in the University of Wales over the last four years.

Mr. Walden: The number of full-time academic staff in the constituent institutions of the University of Wales fell by 112 between 1980-81 and 1984-85.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the overall formal effects on the constituent colleges of the University of Wales of the projected cut in University Grants Committee funding over the next five years.

Mr. Walden: The suggested reduction in funding of 2 per cent. a year is a planning hypothesis adopted by the University Grants Committee to give it some flexibility in allocating resources between institutions and some room for manoeuvre in relation to future levels of inflation. The Government's expenditure plans for 1986-87 to 1988-89 provide for a reduction of about one per cent. a year compared with expected inflation over the same period. The future levels of funding for individual institutions, including the constituent colleges of the University of Wales will be decided by the UGC in the light of its current planning exercise and of the resources available. No decisions have yet been taken.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the number of student places lost in the University of Wales over the last four years.

Mr. Walden: The number of full-time students at the constituent institutions of the University of Wales fell by 1,481 between the academic years 1980-81 and 1984-85.

Universities (Facilities for the Disabled)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many universities in Wales, as of January 1986, are fully equipped with facilities for the handicapped.

Mr. Walden: The information is not available, but my right hon. Friend is assured that the constituent colleges of the University of Wales welcome applications from handicapped students and do all they can to accommodate suitably qualified students.

University Lecturers (Wales)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state the number of lecturers employed in Welsh universities over the last five years.

Mr. Walden: The information is as follows:

Full-time Lecturers in Welsh Universities

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Readers/Senior Lecturers					
Wholly university financed	599	587	571	559	519
Others	12	18	20	25	59
Lecturers					
Wholly university financed	1,242	1,242	1,191	1,181	1,150
Others	308	319	320	329	396
All full-time academic staff					
Wholly university financed	2,201	2,178	2,089	2,050	1,943
Others	534	560	563	570	680

Students (Wales)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state the number of overseas students enrolled in Welsh universities over the last five years.

Mr. Walden: The information is as follows:

Total overseas students enrolled in Welsh universities

	Academic year beginning in				
	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Undergraduate	1,515	1,480	1,412	1,201	1,087
Postgraduate	1,063	1,041	957	1,036	1,121
Total	2,578	2,521	2,369	2,237	2,208

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list, by socio-economic class, the number of students enrolled in Welsh university courses or polytechnic courses in each of the last five years.

Mr. Walden: Information on the social class of entrants to Welsh universities could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Polytechnic statistics for Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. However, I understand that such statistics are not collected.

Secondary Examinations Council (Syllabuses)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the number of syllabuses approved by the Secondary Examination Council; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: Teachers are understably concerned to receive approved GCSE syllabuses as soon as possible. I share their concern. The Secondary Examinations Council has made good progress in its demanding task of scrutinising and approving some 250 syllabuses in a few months: well over 100 syllabuses have so far been approved. The Secondary Examinations Council expects to have approved by Easter about two thirds of all syllabuses submitted and is on course to approve the remainder on schedule, that is by the end of April.

The first approved GCSE syllabuses are now in schools, and others are following.

Natural Environment Research Council (Exhibition)

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to the Natural Environment Research Council to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Walden: I understand that arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 28 July to Friday 1 August 1986.

EMPLOYMENT

News International Plant, Wapping (Work Permits)

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General how many people from overseas having work permits work for any company at the Wapping newspaper plant.

Mr. Lang: One work permit has been issued in the last 12 months for employment by a company at the Wapping newspaper plant.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

Mr. Baldry asked the Paymaster General what money has been committed to date by his Department on the technical and vocational education initiative; and how much he expects local authorities to contribute to the initiative.

Mr. Trippier: £170 million at current prices has so far been committed to the initiative up to 1991 by the Manpower Services Commission, acting for the Government. In addition a further £58 million is expected to be committed in respect of TVEI projects to start this year and next.

Of these sums £50.2 million has been spent to date. Education authorities are not required under the terms of the initiative to contribute additional funds beyond those which would normally be committed to the education of the students.

Scottish "Daily Record" and "Sunday Mail"

Mr. Craigen asked the Paymaster General if any assistance has been provided by officials of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service with efforts to obtain

a settlement of the current dispute affecting the Scottish *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail;* and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I understand that ACAS has been in touch with both sides and remains available to assist where it can. I hope that the dispute will soon be resolved.

YTS

Mr. Freeman asked the Paymaster General if he now has final figures for the number of entrants to YTS in 1984-85; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission has released figures today which show that there were 397,351 entrants to YTS in 1984-85.

Cumulative figures at the end of each month were:

	Numbers
1984	
April	10,942
May	24,160
June	72,466
July	140,255
August	197,718
September	296,907
October	333,537
November	352,031
December	360,197
1985	
January	379,380
February	390,404
March	397,351

The figures given above represent the actual number of scheme starts including second and subsequent starts where trainees have transferred between schemes. We estimate that the number of individuals entering YTS is some 10 per cent. lower than the figures for starts in the table.

These figures differ from those published during 1984-85 because they include notifications of starts which had not been received by the time that the monthly statistics were announced.

The Commission's computerised management informaqution system, from which YTS statistics are obtained, is currently being re-programmed and improved to meet the needs of two year YTS. As a result of this work on the computer system, we will not be able to provide a full range of information on one-year or two-year YTS, including details below area level, until towards the end of summer 1986. However, the most important national, regional and area YTS statistics will continue to be available and more detailed information will be available retrospectively when the re-programming work has been completed.

SCOTLAND

Forestry Planting

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will review the grades of land that can be released for forestry planting.

Mr. Rifkind: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

PRIME MINISTER

North Korea

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Prime Minister if any recent consideration has been given to developing diplomatic relations with the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea; if she will seek to arrange a meeting with that country's president, to discuss the matter; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: There are no plans to develop diplomatic relations with North Korea which we do not recognise as a state. Nor do I intend to seek a meeting of the kind proposed by the hon. Member.

TRANSPORT

Glasgow Airport

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from *(a)* Strathclyde regional council and *(b)* Renfrew district council on the future development of Glasgow airport.

Mr. Michael Spicer: None. Strathclyde regional council and Renfrew district council submitted their views to the review of Scottish lowland airports policy in 1984 and these were taken into account in the published Report of the working group.

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to lift or vary restrictions on traffic movements at, and size of aircraft using, Glasgow airport.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. The role of Glasgow airport and the nature of its operations were considered carefully during the review of Scottish lowlands airports policy undertaken in 1984. As a result, the Government reaffirmed the existing policy for the Scottish lowland airports in the White Paper on "Airports Policy" published in June 1985 (Cmnd. 9542).

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the technical objections to jumbo jets landing at Glasgow airport.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The length of the runway at Glasgow would impose some limitations on payloads which could be carried on larger aircraft on longer range services. The review of Scottish lowland airports policy concluded that any increase in the length of the runway could not be justified in economic terms and that the topography would restrict the usefulness of any extension.

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Transport what advice he has sought on the implications of the length of the runway at Glasgow airport for the frequency and size of aircraft that can use the airport.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This was examined as part of the review of Scottish lowlands airports policy, published in April 1985. The runway at Glasgow is adequate for traffic using the airport, and for the expected growth in traffic.

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to expand the customs facilities at Glasgow airport.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Glasgow airport is the responsibility of the British Airports Authority. The BAA is currently undertaking a programme of improvements to

international facilities at Glasgow airport, expected to cost £2 million. The project will provide enlarged accommodation in the baggage reclaim area and new office accommodation for Customs and Immigration authorities as well as improvements to the departure lounge and shopping areas.

Maryport Harbour Commissioners

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise with him the board's failure to appoint two persons to the Maryport harbour commissioners, as required under section 15 of the Maryport Harbour Act 1894.

Mr. Ridley: This is a matter entirely between the Maryport harbour commissioners and the British Railways Board.

MV Derbyshire

Mr. Waller: asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about his Department's investigations into the loss of the MV Derbyshire in 1980.

Mr. Ridley: The Derbyshire was a large bulk carrier which disappeared in the Pacific Ocean in September 1980 with the loss of 44 lives. There were no survivors, no distress messages were received, and no wreckage was recovered which gave any indication of the cause of the loss. The then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade announced at the time that in the absence of any material evidence about the cause of the loss of the vessel for formal investigation would serve no useful purpose, although he made clear that this decision could be reconsidered should any new and material evidence come to light.

During the following five years my Department, (and, prior to June 1983, the Department of Trade) commissioned extensive research into the structural design of the Derbyshire. It has also investigated reports of defects found in some of the sister ships to the Derbyshire and has interviewed representatives of the builders and the classification society. The results of all this work are summarised in a report, of which I have placed a copy in the Library. Copies are also being made available to the interested parties.

The report concludes that, while there is some circumstantial evidence which tends to suggest that massive structural failure may have been the cause of the loss of the vessel, this evidence is not in itself conclusive and the way in which the Derbyshire was lost is, and will almost certainly remain, a matter of speculation.

I have given careful consideration to requests from seafarers' representatives and from relatives of those lost on the Derbyshire that a formal investigation should now be held, even at this late stage. While I have every sympathy with those whose relatives were lost with the Derbyshire I have concluded that a formal investigation, conducted some five-and-a-half years after the loss of the vessel, is not likely to produce any significant additional evidence about the cause of her loss, beyond what is contained in the Department's report. I do not therefore propose to order one.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Forestry Assets (Privatisation)

Mr. Canavan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what communication he has had with the Forestry Commission about privatisation of forestry assets in England.

Mr. Jopling: The Forestry Commission is directly responsible to me for its activities in England. It reports regularly to me on these activities, including the sale of commission assets.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Hospital Ancillary Services

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the privatisation of hospital ancillary services.

Mr. Fowler: The Government are seeking to achieve the best value for money in the National Health Service and the maximum amount of resources devoted to patient care. Part of this policy is to improve the cost effectiveness of the domestic and cleaning services, the catering services and the laundry services. So far, health authorities have put one-third of these services out to competitive tender. Our latest estimate is that as a result of this policy annual savings of £42 million are now being achieved. This compares with a savings figure of only £9 million 12 months previously. These savings come in part from the use of outside contractors and in part from improvements in the efficiency of the in-house organisation. Savings are now mounting steadily as more services are put to tender and further substantial progress can be expected. These savings are being retained by health authorities for use in running and developing services to patients. The resources released are now making a substantial contribution to patient care.

The savings achieved in individual regions are shown in the table:

	£ '000
Northern	2,528
Yorkshire	3,378
Trent	2,565
East Anglian	2,855
North West Thames	4,725
North East Thames	3,145
South East Thames	2,986
South West Thames	5,906
Wessex	911
Oxford	1,788
South Western	2,078
West Midlands	2,970
Mersey	3,933
North Western	1,120
SHA's	1,086
Total	41,974

AIDS

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what medical experts he has consulted in the course of his consideration of giving syringes to drug addicts for the purpose of limiting the spread of acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Hayhoe: Apart from departmental experts' views, I have received advice from practising clinicians in the field of drug abuse. The issue is currently being considered by the Scottish Committee on HTLV III infection and intravenous drug misuse, which is chaired by the director of the south-east Scotland regional blood transfusion service and by the expert advisory group on AIDS, which is chaired by the Government's Chief Medical Officer. No conclusions have yet been reached. The advisory council on the misuse of drugs will be consulted at its next meeting in May.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps are taken by his Department before it seeks to recover certificated housing benefit overpaid so as to ensure that the claimant has first been notified by the relevant local authority *(a)* that a decision to recover has been made and *(b)* that the claimant may apply to the authority for a review of that decision.

Mr. Major: Local authorities are under a statutory obligation to notify claimants of all determinations of benefit, including any given rise to an overpayment. The notification must inform the claimant of his right to seek a review of the determination. It is a matter for individual authorities to decide how best to inform claimants of actual amounts of any overpayments and the proposed method of recovery. The Department's local offices become directly involved in recovering only certain categories of overpaid certificated benefit which are referred to them by the local authorities. In these cases the local office informs the claimant of the reason for the overpayment, the proposals for recovery, and that if the claimant disagrees with the calculation of the overpayment he should take this up with the relevant local authority.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what provision is being made by his Department for extra staff to be available to deal with exceptionally severe weather payments in order to avoid the long delays to routine claims.

Mr. Major: The manpower provided for DHSS local offices contains a margin to deal with peaks of work such as that relating to exceptionally severe weather which, by their nature, cannot be planned in advance.

Hospitals

Sir Gerard Vaughan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many National Health Service hospitals have been closed in Berkshire since May 1979; how many National Health Service beds have been withdrawn as a consequence; and how many National Health Service beds have been withdrawn as a result of major downgradings.

Mr. Hayhoe: Since May 1979 four hospitals in Berkshire have been closed. At the time of the closures a total of 230 National Health Service beds had been in use in these four hospitals. This compares with a bed availability of some 4,000 across the whole of the two health districts in Berkshire. Facilities have been provided elsewhere to meet patient needs. The services reprovided include general acute beds, beds for the elderly and elderly mentally ill, and facilities for people with mental handicaps.

There has been no loss of beds as a result of "downgrading" or deterioration in building fabric.

Nurses (Mentally Ill and Mentally Handicapped)

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, in view of the shortages of nursing staff in the mentally ill and mentally handicapped specialties, he will consider the introduction of further incentive payments to nurses in these areas.

Mr. Hayhoe: Nursing staff in hospital-based mental illness and mental handicap services currently receive a pay lead of £165 per annum.

Although for a variety of reasons recruitment is traditionally difficult, the total number of nursing staff employed in these services in Great Britain rose by 2·3 per cent. between September 1983 and September 1984.

The nursing and midwifery staffs negotiating council is currently reviewing relativities in the nurse clinical grading structure, and the implications of any new structure for existing responsibility allowances and leads. When this work is complete, it will be for the independent review body which considers nurses' pay to recommend appropriate levels for any allowances and leads.

Goods and Services (Payment)

Mr. Ottaway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average time it takes his Department to pay suppliers of goods and services to his Department.

Mr. Major: Payments to suppliers are not centralised, but may be made from any of the local, regional or central offices of the Department. No figures are therefore available for an average time for payment across the Department as a whole.

NHS (Compensation Scheme)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to introduce a comprehensive state compensation scheme for persons harmed by National Health Service treatment to avoid the necessity of such persons having to resort to the courts.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) on 28 January at columns *493-94*, and to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 21 November 1985 at column *288*.

Health Authorities (Resources)

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about the use by health authorities of the quality adjusted life years formula for allocating resources between different expenditure priorities; which authorities use such formulae; what criteria are used in applying them; whether the criteria vary from region to region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret this information is not available centrally.

The quality adjusted life year is a qualitative measure of health which is being developed experimentally in

various centres mainly, so far, for evaluating new medical developments. No concensus has yet emerged on its practical use by health authorities.

Cancer (Aldermaston and Burghfield)

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he expects either the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment or the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to produce their findings about incidences of leukaemia and lymphatic cancer among the under 25 year olds living in Aldermaston and Burghfield, by the end of 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Pensions

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out the average level of *(a)* the state earnings-related pension scheme additional component and *(b)* the guaranteed minimum pension paid out each year since 1978, both at current and constant prices; and on the basis of the economic assumptions of the five-year rolling Public Expenditure Survey Committee programme, what he estimates will be their levels over the next five years.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Social Security Bill

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate the savings expected to be made from each of the relevant clauses in the Social Security Bill, both in the first year after implementation and in whatever year the saving reaches its maximum.

Mr. Newton: The financial effects of those clauses relating to benefits paid from the national insurance fund were explained in the "Report by the Government Acturary on the Financial Effects of the Bill on the National Insurance Fund" (Cmnd. 9711). On the financial effects of other clauses I would refer the hon. Member to what is said in the explanatory and financial memorandum to the Bill.

Benefit Claimants

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list *(a)* the number of claimants of social security benefits and *(b)* the number of dependants in 1979 and at the latest available date and if he will calculate the extent to which the increase in unemployment since 1979 correlates with the increase in the number of claimants and dependants.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to the reply*, 19 March 1986]: I regret it is not possible to provide the information in the form requested without a substantial element of over-counting because some people receive more than one benefit. However, the latest available information in respect of these benefits related solely to unemployment is as follows:

Date	*Number of recipients**	*Number of dependents*†*
	Unemployment benefit only	
November 1979	386,600	158,500
November 1984	699,500	154,300
	Unemployment benefit plus supplementary allowance	
November 1979	80,100	129,600
December 1983	205,500	351,500
	Supplementary allowance only	
November 1979	435,700	382,000
December 1983	1,504,400	1,188,400

* Figures are rounded to the nearest 100
† Adults and children

Although no direct correlation is possible between these two sets of figures there is some indication of an upward trend in the number of unemployed without dependents.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Quality

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the latest long-term water quality objectives and the timetables for achieving them adopted by each authority for both inland and tidal waters.

Mr. John Patten: The responsibility for drawing up detailed water quality objectives and the timetables for their implementation rests with the individual water authorities. Generally there is extensive public consultation and the reports are available to interested parties and published. An overriding consideration is that the objectives reflect the national policy that authorities should maintain and improve the quality of surface waters.

There are also specific quality standards for substances and waters covered by various EC Directives, such as the fresh water fish and the dangerous substances directives. Authorities are required to observe these international obligations.

Emergency Headquarters, Dover

Mr. Peter Rees asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, in view of the decision of the Secretary of State for the Home Department not to refurbish the emergency headquarters at Dover of the former sub-region 6.1, those headquarters might be opened for public viewing.

Mr. Tracey: The management and presentation of Dover Castle is the responsibility of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission. Decisions as to which areas should be open to the public are for them to take. My hon. Friend may care to pursue this matter with the chairman.

Caravan Sites

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what complaints he has received about alleged failures by the Camping and Caravanning Club to consult the local authority concerned before issuing a certificate under paragraph 5 of the first schedule to the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have received one complaint of this nature.

Although there is no statutory requirement upon the Camping and Caravanning Club to consult the relevant local planning authority before issuing certificates under paragraph 5 of the first schedule to the 1960 Act, I understand that in practice it invariably does so and that it had in fact notified the district council in the case in question.

Suppliers (Payment)

Mr. Ottaway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average time it takes his Department to pay suppliers of goods and services to his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: 90 per cent. of invoices received by the Crown Suppliers and DOE (Central) are paid within 30 days, and the remainder as soon as queries or disputes have been resolved.

For PSA works contracts, the payment provisions will vary according to the type and value of the contract. Normally there are arrangements for payment on account during the course of a contract, but both those interim payments and the final payment can only be made once the work has been valued and certified as satisfactory. Following such certification, bills are normally paid within three weeks.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Chislehurst of 13 March 1986, he will introduce legislation similar to the Tobacco Products (Control of Advertising, Sponsorship and Sales Promotion) Regulations 1986 which come into force in Eire on 1 July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: I hope to reach agreement with the tobacco industry during the renegotiation of the voluntary agreement on sports sponsorship.

Community Support Programme (Docklands)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the numbers of workers in the community support programme submitted to him for 1986-87 by the London Docklands Development Corporation which have not been approved; when he expects to approve such applications; and if, in respect of those where a decision cannot be made within the next seven days, he will make it his policy to retain the relevant personnel for three months beyond 31 March 1986.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Water and Sewerage Law

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish his proposals for modernising water and sewerage law.

Mr. John Patten: As promised in Cmnd. 9734 "Privatisation of the Water Authorities in England and Wales", I have today published a consultation paper outlining our proposals for modernising the law and have placed copies in the Library. Reform is long overdue and I believe our proposals will benefit both consumers, by resolving some common causes of complaint, and water authorities, by enabling them to operate more efficiently. We would welcome comments on the proposals and they should be sent to the Department by 30 May.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 24 March 1986

ENVIRONMENT

Water Pollution

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of individuals employed by each water authority on pollution monitoring and control in each year since 1980-81; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not held by my Department but operating expenditure on water quality legislation and pollution alleviation may be helpful. The figures are:

	£million
1980-81	16·1
1981-82	18·3
1982-83	19·1
1983-84	20·6
1984-85	21·1

Further information may be found in the November 1985 edition of *Waterfacts*, published by the Water Authorities Association, a copy of which I placed in the Library in response to recent questions from the hon. Member from Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown).

Management Agreements

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will place a copy of the Gould report on management agreements under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in the Library; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he received the Gould report on management agreements under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mrs. Rumbold: The consultant's report on financial guidelines for management agreements was received in September 1985. It is currently being considered in detail and I shall be making an announcement and publishing the appropriate background information in due course.

Nature Conservation

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 3 March, *Official Report*, column 39, if he will consult widely with conservation bodies before issuing a new circular to local authorities giving guidance on their role on nature conservation.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. It is our intention to ensure that appropriate bodies have been or will be consulted.

Sheltered Housing

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce legislation providing for the compulsory registration of private and voluntary sheltered housing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Private and voluntary sheltered housing providing board and "personal care" of the kind defined in part I of the Registered Homes Act 1984 would be covered by that Act. We have no plans to introduce legislation for the registration of ordinary private and voluntary sheltered housing, as this differs from ordinary housing only in addition of particular design features and facilities for help in emergencies.

Planning Advice (Small Firms)

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the new circular and booklet on planning advice for small firms.

Mr. Tracey: DOE circular 2/86, "Development by Small Businesses" and the booklet, "A Step by Step Guide to Planning Permission for Small Businesses", were published on 20 March. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Palace of Westminster

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about the incidence of build-up of static electricity in the Palace of Westminster; and what action he has taken in consequence.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 March, c. *255*]: I would refer the hon. Member to my replies to my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) on 14 March at column 619 and 17 March at column 68.

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the cost of *(a)* gas, *(b)* electricity, *(c)* oil and *(d)* other fuels for the Palace of Westminster in each of the last five years.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his answer*, 20 March, c. *255*]: Expenditure figures, in cash, for gas, electricity and oil as used on the parliamentary estate as a whole are given in the table. No other fuels are used.

	(a) Gas	*(b)* Electricity	*(c)* Oil	*(d)* Other
1981-82	285,064	343,186	76,528	—
1982-83	291,605	367,737	84,000	—
1983-84	289,383	412,664	19,067	—
1984-85	306,663	426,695	60,965	—
*1985-86	326,500	435,700	35,000	—

* Estimated.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

GCSE

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his latest estimate of the cost of introducing the general certificate of secondary education examinations.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) on 21 March.

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if any transitional arrangements are being made to cater for students who are sick or who fail their O or A-level examinations and who wish to re-take them after the introduction of the general certificate of secondary education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The first GCSE examinations will be held in summer 1988. GCE O-level examinations will not be available from then on. I understand that the GCE examination boards will be making their normal provision for O-level examinations in winter 1987 which will enable pupils to repeat examinations taken in summer that year. GCE A-level examinations are not affected.

Books (Primary Schools)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the level of expenditure per pupil on text and library books in primary schools.

Mr. Chris Patten: Since 1979, spending per primary pupil on books has increased slightly in real terms as measured by the GDP deflator. In their report "The Effect of Local Authority Expenditure Policies on Education Provision in England—1984" Her Majesty's inspectors stated that the level of book provision in primary schools was

"satisfactory or better in over four-fifths of LEAs".

The Government's expenditure plans allow authorities to give priority to expenditure on books so long as they take advantage of the scope for savings elsewhere in the education budget and contain their costs.

Overseas Students

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on recommendations affecting his Department's responsibility contained in "Continuing Crisis: the Response to Overseas Student Groups in Hardship", in the light of recent discussions chaired by his hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Mr. Walden: The report "Containing Crisis" was welcomed by the Government and other organisations concerned at the fourth "round table" meeting on matters concerning overseas students chaired by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 27 February. Departments concerned — including this one — are considering the report in detail, and expect to be able to issue a joint response to its recommendations in a few months' time.

Schools Inspectors

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average period that has elapsed between the inspection of a school by Her Majesty's Inspectorate and the publication of its report since 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: Since 1 January 1983, there have been 402 published reports by Her Majesty's Inspectorate on individual primary and secondary schools on the basis of formal inspections. The average time between inspection and publication has been nine months, although Her Majesty's Inspectorate does discuss its findings with the head and governing body of the school on the completion of each inspection. It remains the aim of Her Majesty's Inspectorate, as set out in the 1983 policy statement "The work of Her Majesty's Inspectorate in England and Wales" that reports be issued to individual institutions within six months of an inspection. In addition to carrying out formal inspections, Her Majesty's Inspectorate makes a large number of specialist and routine visits each year to keep in touch with the situation in particular institutions. Her Majesty's Inspectorate reports orally to the staff concerned on what it finds, but these visits do not lead to published reports. In 1985 Her Majesty's Inspectorate visited some 15 per cent. of primary schools and nearly 60 per cent. of secondary schools in England.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools employed in England for each of the last five years.

Sir Keith Joseph: The information is as follows:

(At 1 April)	*Number*
1982	392
1983	382
1984	390
1985	454
1986	*464

* Forecast.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools in England who have had *(a)* no experience of teaching in primary schools, *(b)* up to three years teaching experience in primary schools, *(c)* three to six years teaching in primary schools and *(d)* more than six years teaching in primary schools;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools in England who have had *(a)* no experience of teaching in secondary schools, *(b)* up to three years teaching experience in secondary schools, *(c)* three to six years teaching in secondary schools and *(d)* more than six years teaching in secondary schools;

(3) if any of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools in England have had no experience of teaching in schools.

Sir Keith Joseph: The overwhelming majority of Her Majesty's inspectors are appointed on the basis of proven success as teachers in schools or establishments of further or higher education. As Her Majesty's inspectors are appointed in mid-career, many have taught successfully in a number of different phases of the education service. In

exceptional cases, Her Majesty's inspectors with a non-teaching background may be appointed on the basis of experience in other aspects of education which the inspectorate considers necessary to have within its numbers. The Department does not maintain in readily accessible form records of all the previous employment of Her Majesty's inspectors. The detailed information requested could thus only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Subject Teachers

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what proportion of teachers of home economics in secondary schools in England are estimated to be *(a)* over 50 years of age and *(b)* over 40 years of age;

(2) what proportion of teachers of foreign languages in secondary schools in England are estimated to be *(a)* over 50 years of age and *(b)* over 40 years of age.

Mr. Chris Patten: The estimates that follow are derived from a survey of a sample of maintained secondary schools carried out by this Department in 1984.

England
Full-time teachers teaching named subject in maintained secondary schools, 1984

	Estimated percentage who were (a) 50 years of age and over	*(b) 40 years of age and over*
Home economics	17	44
French	15	40
German	10	37
Spanish	9	34
Russian	17	53
Italian	19	36
Other modern languages	38	61
Classical languages	27	62

With the exception of home economics and French, the numbers of teachers of the subjects listed who are in particular age groups are relatively small. Percentages shown may therefore be subject to wide margins of sampling error. Small differences between percentages should therefore not be treated as significant.

Poundswick School, Manchester

Mr. Silvester asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what steps he intends to take to seek to ensure the restoration of education to pupils at the Poundswick school, Manchester;

(2) what steps he intends to take to seek to ensure that all pupils of Poundswick school, Manchester who wish to do so are able to sit their examinations this summer.

Mr. Dunn: These matters are for the Manchester local education authority. My right hon. Friend trusts that they will very soon be able to bring the disruption to an end.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Domestic Furniture (Fire Safety)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to improve the safety of domestic furniture with regard to the danger of fumes emanating from them in the event of fire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I would refer the hon. Member to the answers given on 20 March to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) at column 266 and the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) at columns 264-5.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table based on *(a)* the figures for the fourth quarter of 1976 and *(b)* the average for the years 1973 to 1976 inclusive, showing the change in the real exchange rate, measured in terms of export prices, for the latest available period against Germany, the United States of America and Japan; and if he will also include the change in the nominal exchange rate to date compared with the average for the period in question, together with the rates of inflation over the past 12 months.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the table.

	Federal Republic of Germany	*United States of America*	*Japan*
*Relative export prices**			
Percentage change Q3 1985 compared with:			
Q4 1976	+50	+½	+28
Average 1973-76	+42	−8½	+26
Nominal exchange rate†			
Percentage change Q3 1985 compared with:			
Q4 1976	−1½	−16	−32
Average 1973-76	−31	−37	−48
Consumer price index			
Percentage change Q3 1985 compared with Q3 1984	+2¼	+3¼	+2

* The United Kingdom Export Unit Value index for manufactures compared with that of each other country named, in common currency terms.

† National currencies per pound (sterling).

Non-woven Fabrics

Mr. Sackville asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will give his Department's estimate of current and future demand for United Kingdom manufactured non-woven fabrics;

(2) if he will give his Department's estimate of United Kingdom installed capacity and production of non-woven fabrics.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The available information relates to the production and demand for non-woven textile fabrics excluding non-wovens of plastic and paper, figures for which are given in the following table. No figures are available for installed capacity or future demand for non-woven fabrics.

*Non-woven textile fabrics**

	1984 £ *million*	*1984 Q1-Q3* £ *million*	*1985 Q1-Q3* £ *million*
United Kingdom Manufacturers' Deliveries†	88·9	65·3	72·0

	1984 £ million	1984 Q1-Q3 £ million	1985 Q1-Q3 £ million
Imports	61·8	44·7	52·0
Exports	29·5	21·2	25·6
Apparent Home Demand‡	121·2	88·8	98·4

• Non-woven fabrics of bonded fibre (other than felt and stitch-bonded materials).

† The delivery figures relate to sales to United Kingdom and overseas markets by establishments with a minimum employment of 25.

‡ Apparent home demand is United Kingdom manufacturers' deliveries in line 1 to United Kingdom and markets less exports (line 3) plus imports (line 2).

Sources:

Production—Business Monitor PQ 4399.

Trade —Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sackville asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what applications he is currently considering for grant aid for the installation of new productive capacity of non-woven fabrics.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Details of applications for grant aid are not available for reasons of commercial confidentiality. However, details of the following are published quarterly in *British Business:* (1) individual payments of old-style regional development grants over £25,000; (2) payments to individuals of new-style regional development grants which cumulatively amount to more than £25,000; (3) when payments have been made, offers of regional selective assistance over £5,000 and general investment support.

Scientific Research

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on how the United Kingdom's spending on scientific research compares to other European countries.

Mr. Pattie: The available information from international sources relates to gross expenditure on research and development (R & D). The latest data are given in the table below.

Gross R&D expenditure at 1983 purchasing power parities

	$ billion
Germany	19·7
France	14·3
United Kingdom	13·5
Italy	6·0
Netherlands	3·3
Sweden	3·0

Source: OECD, Recent Results.

Petrol

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will set up an urgent inquiry by the Director General of Fair Trading under section 13 of the Competition Act 1980 into the price of petrol.

Mr. Howard: The Government's concern about the oil companies' initial response to the petrol duty change announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Budget is well known. However, the powers under section 13 of the Act have not previously been used. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will consider whether this or other action under competition legislation may be justified in the light of further developments in the petrol retail market and all relevant circumstances.

Import Substitution

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he takes to promote import substitution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I will reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

St. Mary's, Southampton

25. **Mr. Chope** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what is the policy of the Church Commissioners on the sale and development of the deanery grounds at St. Mary's, Southampton.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The Commissioners do not own this land, neither have they received an application for their statutory consent to its sale and development.

PRIME MINISTER

British Airways

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Prime Minister what discussions she has had with the chairman of British Airways about whether the Bermuda 2 air routes agreement must be settled before British Airways can be privatised; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: This matter was discussed when I met the chairman of British Airways on 17 March. He confirmed that British Airways supports Her Majesty's Government's efforts to achieve a successful outcome in the current negotiations on the Bermuda 2 agreement.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Prime Minister if she has received any reports of the effect of changing and delaying the dates for the privatisation of British Airways on staff morale at all levels; if she will now send a message of encouragement to the chairman and all his employees; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government have never set a date for the privatisation of British Airways and I regret that it is still not possible to do so. I know that this has been a major disappointment for the board and staff of British Airways. The company and all its employees deserve great credit for bringing the airline to a state of readiness for privatisation, which I hope will soon be achieved.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy not to take any action to prevent British Airways from purchasing or giving firm orders for *(a)* necessary replacement aircraft, *(b)* new aircraft for replacement or expansion of trade, *(c)* refurbishing existing aircraft and *(d)* modern avionic navigational and safety equipment from now until the mid 1990s; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: British Airways has received authorisation for all the major equipment needs it currently

foresees for the immediate future and has no requests for investment approval outstanding. Satisfaction of British Airways' further investment requirements will continue to depend on the viability of the investment, and the performance of the business, which will necessarily determine the company's ability, both before and after privatisation, to raise finance from its shareholders and elsewhere.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the change in the performance of British Airways over the past three years: and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: British Airways has turned a pre-tax loss of £110·6 million in 1981-82 into a profit of £168·1 million in 1984-85 and I understand that it is now one of the world's most profitable major international airlines.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on Government policy on the future of British Airways.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the statement which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport made on this subject on 12 March at columns 482-3.

Leicester

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister what funds have been made available to the city of Leicester in each of the past three years and to date, broken down by Department; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The readily available information covers grants and subsidies to the city of Leicester district council and is given in the table. The figures for inner-area programme, slum clearance and improvement grants are from DOE central records of payments and entitlements, whereas the balance of specific grants not identified by Departments has been estimated from the authority's outturn or budget returns.

The figures do not include allocations of money other than to the local authority—for instance, social security payments, funding for hospitals and other health services, aid for employment and training measures, grants to companies, voluntary bodies, other institutions and individuals and support for the arts. Details of this funding could not be obtained without disproportionate cost, but it would be in total be much larger than the grants and subsidies to the local authority shown here.

Grants and subsidies to the city of Leicester

£ million

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
I. *Identifiable DOE grants*				
Rate support grant				
Block grant	8·3	8·0	10·7	11·7
Domestic rate relief grant	3·0	3·1	3·1	3·1
Housing subsidy	2·4	—	—	—
Housing benefits	6·7	—	—	—
Inner area programme	2·1	2·4	2·3	1·8
Slum clearance	0·5	0·5	0·4	0·3
Homes insulation scheme	0·4	0·2	0·2	0·2
Improvement grants	2·2	3·2	4·2	5·1
II. *DHSS grants*				
Housing benefits	3·3	24·9	27·4	29·2
III. *Other grants not identifiable by departments*				
Specific revenue grants	3·1	6·0	2·5	3·5
Capital grants	2·0	3·0	3·2	n/a

Notes:

1. The block grant figure for 1982-83 is final. Those for 1983-84 to 1985-86 are based on the latest supplementary reports for those years.
2. The figures for domestic rate relief grant for 1982-83 to 1984-85 are final. The figure for 1985-86 is the first estimate.
3. Housing benefit includes rent rebates, rent allowances and rate rebates. In 1982-83, payments were made by both DOE and DHSS. From 1983-84 payments have been made only by DHSS.
4. The 1985-86 figure for inner area programme is for payments to date.
5. The 1985-86 figures for slum clearance, homes insulation scheme, improvement grants and DHSS housing benefit payments are provisional.
6. The figures for the balance of specific grants not paid by the DOE have been estimated from the authority's outturn or budget returns.

Energy Efficiency (Low Income Households)

Mr. Rost asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on co-ordination between the Department of Energy and the Department of Health and Social Security of the Government's policy towards promoting energy efficiency in buildings occupied by low-income households.

The Prime Minster: In the short term, the most effective way to help low income households with their heating bills is through the social security system. The Department of Health and Social Security provides such assistance through the weekly scale rates for those on supplementary benefit; on top of that, heating additions are now worth about £400 million a year, which is £140 million more in real terms than when this Government took office. Meanwhile, the Government's energy efficiency campaign provides advice for all households on how to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. In addition, the Government-funded voluntary sector insulation projects, which provide a free or low-cost basic insulation service for low income households, doubled in number during 1985 and are expected to double again during Energy Efficiency Year. I am satisfied with co-ordination between the Departments of Energy and of Health and Social Security on these respective programmes.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Autocrime

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with insurance companies about the security from theft of motor vehicles and parts thereof and the contents of motor vehicles.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The motor insurance industry is represented on the working group set up last year by the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention to consider autocrime. The group is currently discussing how motor insurers might reflect in premiums the presence or absence of sophisticated security measures. At the recent seminar on crime prevention held by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, motor insurers agreed to consider security in rating vehicles for insurance and in the use of excesses on settlements.

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for the Home department how many prosecutions there have been in England and Wales for theft of a motor vehicle in the last three years; and how many of these have been successful.

Mr. Mellor: The information on the results of criminal proceedings for offences of theft or unauthorised taking of motor vehicles is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" —table S1.1(A), Volume 1, and table S2.1(A), volume 2, under offence classification 48. Corresponding information for 1985 is not yet available.

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many motor vehicles have been reported stolen in the area of the Metropolitan police and the rest of England and Wales, respectively, in each of the last three years; and how many of these subsequently have been recovered.

Mr. Mellor: The numbers of offences of theft or unathorised taking of a motor vehicle recorded by the police are published annually by police force area in "Criminal Statistics England and Wales, Supplementary Tables Volume 3" (table S.3.1 of the issue for 1984). Total figures for England and Wales are also published annually in a Home Office statistical bulletin, the most recent issue (number 4/86) giving that for 1985; 88,076 such offences were recorded by the Metropolitan police in 1985. The numbers of stolen vehicles recovered are given in the following table.

Stolen vehicles recovered

	Numbers	
	Metropolitan Police District	*England and Wales*
1983	52,200	247,800
1984	58,200	255,900
1985	54,900	262,700

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he is having with motor manufacturers to make vehicles more secure from theft.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Motor manufacturers are represented on the working group set up last year by the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention to consider car security. The group is now following up recommendations made in its report published last November which, inter alia, called on motor manufacturers to persuade car buyers that a high level of security is a desirable feature in new cars and to provide more sophisticated security features as optional extras. Motor manufacturers are also represented on the committee drawing up the British standard on car security, one of the initiatives to emerge from the recent crime prevention seminar held by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research is being conducted by Her Majesty's Government into the security from theft of motor vehicles, their parts and contents.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Recent research projects in this area conducted or commissioned by the Home Office have investigated: possible design changes to enhance vehicle security; the problem of vehicle-related crime in Basingstoke; and abuse of the car import system.

Police Interviews (Tape Recording)

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on the effectiveness of the tape recording of police interviews in selected experimental areas.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The two-year period of field trials of tape recording of police interviews with suspects in five areas is nearly complete. A further interim report will be published by the Home Office research and planning unit later this year. The final report will be prepared when all the data from the trials have been analysed.

Officers in all five areas have reacted positively to the new procedures, and there is some early evidence that tape recording has led to an increase in the rate of guilty pleas when cases come before the court.

In December 1985, the Home Office approved expenditure on police minor works connected with the introduction of some tape recording facilities in 29 forces, additional to the field trial areas. Those works will be started in the course of the current financial year. We shall be encouraging the implementation of tape recording of interviews and we shall shortly be inviting proposals for expenditure in the next financial year.

In the course of this year, my right hon. Friend intends to issue a code of practice in connection with the tape recording of interviews.

United States Air Force (Traffic Incident)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Hampshire about the circumstances in which a cruise convoy support vehicle crashed and overturned on the A339, two miles from Basingstoke, at 12.30 pm on 17 March.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable of Hampshire that this incident involved a vehicle belonging to the United States air force towing a trailer carrying camping equipment. At 11.45 am, as a heavy goods vehicle approached from the opposite direction, the driver of the USAF vehicle appeared to lose control and after mounting a bank it overturned. Three persons were on board but none was hurt. The vehicle did not form part of a cruise missile or any other convoy, and there was no wider threat to safety.

Licensing Hours

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further consultations he has in mind to test public reaction to the introduction of flexible drinking times in public houses in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have no such further consultations in mind at present. My right hon. Friend will be taking into account the public response to the recent report by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on drinking and attitudes to licensing in Scotland before deciding whether the licensing laws in England and Wales might be changed.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has intentions of completing his consideration of the flexible hours for licensed premises and his discussions with interested parties in time to present legislation in this Session of Parliament.

Mr. Mellor: We have no plans for legislation on liquor licensing hours in this session of Parliament. We shall be looking carefully at the available evidence on flexible licensing hours in Scotland before reaching a decision on whether legislation is desirable in principle.

Leicester Prison

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current prison population at Leicester prison; and how this compares with each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: The information is given in the following table:

Population of Leicester Prison at the end of February

Year	*Population*
1976	400
1977	359
1978	348
1979	379
1980	397
1981	374
1982	388
1983	428
1984	394
1985	394
1986	415

Rape Defendants

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to remove the anonymity of rape defendants once charged; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a Question by my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) on 20 March 1986 at column 277.

Indian Sub-continent (Visitors)

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors from the Indian sub-continent have failed to return home within the period specified on their entry clearance in the last 12 months.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is not available.

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy not to admit persons from the Indian sub-continent to the United Kingdom on either a permanent or a temporary basis without their first obtaining written permission from a United Kingdom post in the sub-continent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Any person who comes to the United Kingdom for settlement, including for marriage with a view to settlement must first obtain an entry clearance from a British mission abroad. People from the Indian sub-continent do not require entry clearance if they come here as visitors or students but they may apply abroad if they wish to establish before travelling whether they will prima facie qualify for admission on arrival. All immigration control arrangements are kept under continuous re-examination in the light of changing patterns of travel and traffic.

Prisoners (Visits)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prisons which currently allow visits to convicted prisoners more frequently than once every 28 days and identify which of them allow visits once a fortnight.

Mr. Mellor: My noble Friend will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been *(a)* the cost of fares, *(b)* the administrative cost and *(c)* the total cost each year since 1971 of the assisted visits scheme for close relatives visiting prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information, which relates to total expenditure on assisted visits to inmates in the years from 1976-77 onwards is as follows:

	£
1976-77	266,901
1977-78	353,625
1978-79	305,127
1979-80	314,315
1980-81	402,395
1981-82	*318,234
1982-83	*617,025
1983-84	637,795
1984-85	702,808

* As a result of a delay in billing in 1981-82, repayment of about £130,000 relating to expenditure incurred by the Department of Health and Social Security in that financial year was carried over to 1982-83.

These figures do not include administrative costs, which cannot be separately identified.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he has any plans to extend the assisted visits scheme;

(2) if he has any plans to extend the assisted visits scheme to cover *(a)* all visits by close relatives presently eligible to receive assistance for which a visiting order is issued, *(b)* visits to prisoners serving sentences of less than three months, *(c)* reception visits and *(d)* visits by close relatives in full-time work with an income not above supplementary benefit level; and if he has estimates of (i) the costs of fares, (ii) the administrative costs and (iii) the total costs of such extensions.

Mr. Mellor: We have at present no plans to extend the assisted visits scheme. Area probation services already have discretion to provide financial assistance with visits to prison department establishments by close relatives in full-time work with an income not above supplementary benefit level. I have no estimates of the financial information requested.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to increase the funds available for assisted visits.

Mr. Mellor: In 1985-86, estimate provision, in class IX, vote 8, of £750,000 was made for assisted vsits to inmates. The corresponding figure for 1986-87, in class XI, vote 2, is £864,400.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the terms of reference of the inquiry recently being conducted concerning the assisted visits scheme; and if he will publish its findings.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services has initiated an efficiency scrutiny of agency benefit arrangements for low income families, including financial assistance for visits to prison department establishments. I understand that its terms of reference are:

"To examine the current arrangements for claiming and determining entitlement, on the ground of low income, to exemption from, repayment of, or help with charges for NHS prescriptions, dental treatment, spectacles and optical treatment, wigs and appliances, and fares to and from hospitals and prisons, and, pending final Ministerial decision on the future of the scheme, free welfare milk and vitamins; and to recommend changes which, in the light of the revised structure of the main income-related benefits, will lead to more efficient and effective low-income arrangements."

The question of publication is for my right hon. Friend.

Seals

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his latest estimate of the number of seals in British waters; and how this compares with the situation five and 10 years ago, respectively.

Mr. Mellor: The latest available figures, published in the news journal of the National Environment Research Council in December 1985, show that the estimated total populations of grey and common seals in British waters in 1984 were 84,500 and 21,500 respectively. In 1979, the corresponding figures were 72,000 and 20,500 and in 1974 they were 61,000 and 18,500.

Manchester University (Home Secretary's Visit)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress and conduct of the inquiry by the Avon and Somerset police force into the events surrounding the visit of the then Home Secretary to Manchester university on 1 March 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This investigation is now being conducted by the deputy chief constable of the South Wales police. It is expected to be completed within the next 10 weeks. The results will then be considered by the Police Complaints Authority and, if appropriate, the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Repatriation

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the cost to his Department in each of the last five years of paying for tickets to enable those who have been refused leave to enter the United Kingdom to return to their home country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I regret that this information is not available.

The total expenditure on removal of persons from the United Kingdom at public expense, including not only those refused leave to enter, but also those deported, or removed as illegal entrants, in each financial year since 1981-82 is as follows:

Expenditure (to nearest £1,000)

	£
1981-82	555,000
1982-83	546,000
1983-84	581,000
1984-85	856,000

Arrangements have been made so that the expenditure on persons refused entry, and on the other categories mentioned above, will be separately identified from the beginning of the financial year 1986-87.

Magistrates' Court, Southampton

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will add the scheme for a new magistrates' court in Southampton to his Department's priority planning list; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We shall shortly be notifying Hampshire county council that the scheme for a new magistrates courthouse in Southampton has been placed on the priority planning list.

Immigration

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time that an individual, who is refused leave to enter the United Kingdom but is granted temporary admission pending the making of representations by an hon. Member, stays in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested.

The length of time a passenger refused entry spends on temporary admission in these circumstances depends on several factors, including the time within which written representations are received, the number of times further representations are submitted in the same case, and the resources available to consider the representations.

Protection of Animals Act 1911

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in respect of section 1 of the Protection of Animals Act 1911 arguing for an extension of the clause beyond domestic and captive animals.

Mr. Mellor: No central record is kept, but we receive a number of representations on this matter from hon. Members and others, from time to time.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been brought under section 1 of the Protection of Animalls Act 1911 in the last five years in respect of hedgehogs; and how many have resulted in conviction.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to extend section 1 of the Protection of Animals Act 1911 to cover animals other than domestic and captive.

Mr. Mellor: We do not have any plans for legislation to extend the scope of the Protection of Animals Act 1911

to include wild animals. However, there are other statutes which provide protection for particular species, for example, deer and badgers. The course which the Government adopted in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 was to give special protection and to extend it where appropriate to certain species which were thought to be in need of it.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is satisfied with the present law protecting animals as it relates to preventing cruelty to hedgehogs; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We do not have any plans to extend the scope of the Protection of Animals Act 1911 to include wild animals. Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 contains restrictions on the killing of hedgehogs.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Peter Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further initiatives he proposes to take in the field of crime prevention.

Mr. Hurd: Much work is already in hand following the crime prevention seminar hosted by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in January. But it is important that the momentum is not lost and I have therefore established a ministerial group to be chaired by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, with the following terms of reference:

"To carry forward the Government's strategy for preventing crime and the fear of crime by reducing opportunities that exist for crime to occur, and to create confidence within the community that crime can be reduced, having particular regard to:

(i) developing proposals for the more effective implementation of that strategy; and

(ii) the arrangements within and outside of government for the co-ordination, development and implementation of initiatives.

The Group should take such action as it considers necessary and report on its work".

The success of any initiative on crime prevention depends to a great extent on public support and involvement, and the group will also seek to heighten public awareness.

The group will include Ministers and officials from the following Departments: Her Majesty's Treasury; Northern Ireland Office; Scottish Office; Welsh Office; Department of Education and Science; Department of Employment; Department of Energy; Department of Trade and Industry; Department of Health and Social Security; Department of the Environment; Department of Transport.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hong Kong

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's title to Victoria Island and Kowloon, respectively, distinguishing if necessary between different parts of Kowloon; whether the title to any part of these two areas is held with any limit of time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The island of Hong Kong was ceded in perpetuity to the Crown in 1842; the Kowloon peninsula, south of Boundary street, was also ceded as a dependency of Hong Kong in 1860. The remainder of Kowloon was included in the 99-year lease granted in 1898. In accordance with the joint declaration of the United Kingdom and the People's Republic of China, the United Kingdom will restore the whole of Hong Kong to China with effect from 1 July 1997.

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will tabulate the results of the recent elections in Hong Kong by listing in declining order the total number of votes case for each candidate, the percentage of votes cast in each case, for each candidate in the relevant seat, the turnout in the seat, and which candidate was, and was not, elected.

Mr. Renton: It has not been possible in the time available to obtain from the Governor of Hong Kong the information requested. I will write to my hon. Friend with details as soon as possible and arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Nicaragua

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the United States Government concerning American foreign policy towards Nicaragua.

Mr. Eggar: As my right hon. and learned Friend said in reply to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) on 5 February, at column 267, we support the Contadora process: we obviously take steps to ensure that the United States is aware of our views. We want to see Nicaragua commit itself fully to the Contadora principles.

Contras (Central America)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what statements have been made by the Government in the last three years concerning the activities of the Contras in Central America and their financing.

Mr. Eggar: We have made it clear on many occasions, and most recently in my right hon. and learned Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) on 5 February at column 267, that we do not believe the problems of the region can be resolved by armed force. We support a negotiated settlement on the basis of the Contadora principles.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, in the course of negotiations on the Anglo-Irish agreement, he held discussions with the Prime Minister or Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ireland on the substance of the proposed agreement, in the context of discussions with other European Economic Community member states.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I held a number of discussions with Irish Ministers about the Anglo-Irish agreement. No other EC member state was involved or represented in any of these discussions.

USSR (Separate Recognition)

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what way Her

Majesty's Government gave separate recognition to certain member states of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Renton: We do not recognise as a separate state any part of the USSR. Our acceptance in the negotiations leading up to the establishment of the United Nations that the Ukrainian SSR and the Byelorussian SSR, as well as the USSR, should be treated as full UN members with appropriate voting and other rights, does not affect that position.

Australia (EC Trade)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will protest to the European Economic Community Commission on the refusal of Mr. Willie de Clercq, Commissioner for External Affairs, and other European Economic Commission officials to fulfil scheduled discussions on trade with representatives of the Australian Goverment; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The high level consultations between Australia and Commission officials have been postponed. The President of the Commission and his colleagues will be holding talks with the Australian Prime Minister, Mr. Hawke, when he visits Brussels on 22 April.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Electricity Costs

Mr. Wigley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received about electricity costs to the agricultural industry.

Mrs. Fenner: In recent months we received only one representation concerning electricity costs. Energy pricing policy is a matter for the Secretary of State for Energy.

Carcase Weights

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the weight of a carcase is classified under regulations made by his Department as cold weight after one hour following the stunning and consequent slaughter of an animal.

Mr. Gummer: When beef or sheep variable premium is claimed at the deadweight stage, carcases should normally be presented for certification within twenty four hours of slaughter. Payment is based on the cold weight of the carcases concerned which, for the purposes of these schemes, is taken to be the actual weight recorded in cases where the carcase is weighed more than one hour after slaughter. In cases where the carcase is weighed before this time, an adjustment is made to allow for subsequent weight loss.

Intervention Stores

Mr. Clay asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the cost of storage at each intervention store within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer: Storage costs at individual stores vary with the quantities held, which are liable to fluctuate, but total intervention storage and related costs for the 1985-86 financial year are estimated at £110 million.

Brown FK

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy towards the proposal by the EEC Commission to move Brown FK (herring colouring) from annex II (permitted colourings) to annex I (prohibited colourings) of the eighth amendment to the colours direction (Com. (85) 474 Final); what information he has as to which other EEC states use Brown FK; what assessment he has made of the effect of its prohibition *(a)* on the herring industry and *(b)* on the colour of the British kipper; what representations he has received on this from the British industry; and if he will veto any proposal to prohibit Brown FK.

Mrs. Fenner: The eighth amendment to the EC directive on colouring matter in foodstuffs as proposed by the Commission would transfer Brown FK from annex II (those colours which member states may permit if they wish) to annex I (these colours which member states are required to permit). The United Kingdom supports this proposal which recognises that there are no toxicological reasons to prohibit the use of Brown FK. I understand that the Republic of Ireland also permits the use of Brown FK in smoked herrings.

My Department has received representations from the United Kingdom kipper industry regarding Brown FK and is aware of the importance attached by the industry to its use.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Richard Shepherd asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimates he has made of the effect since 1979 of the common agricultural policy on *(a)* the retail prices index and *(b)* real disposable incomes.

Mrs. Fenner: Between 1979 and 1985 the retail price index rose by 67 per cent. and real personal disposable incomes are forecast to have risen by 6 per cent. The corresponding increase in retail food prices was 47 per cent., representing a fall in real terms of 12 per cent.; prices received by agricultural producers rose by 30 per cent. The effect of the common agricultural policy on these indicators could be estimated only on the basis of an array of assumptions on alternatives to the policy that actually obtained. Restraint on CAP price changes in recent years has, however, contributed to the real fall in food prices since 1979.

Salmon Stocks

Mr. Onslow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to conserve salmon stocks in British waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Conservation of British salmon stocks has been an active concern of this Government and of the bodies responsible at local level for maintaining and developing salmon fisheries: the water authorities in England and Wales and the district salmon fishery boards in Scotland. These bodies operate a wide range of measures to regulate salmon fisheries in British waters and to promote the conservation and development of salmon stocks. Research and development into salmon and freshwater fisheries currently costs about £4 million a year and a large part of this is devoted to salmon conservation.

It is because of our long history of such active concern about salmon stocks and strict regulation of fisheries that we have been able to keep the salmon in our rivers over a period when several other countries have seen their stocks of Atlantic salmon decline drastically.

Nevertheless, the threat presented by illegal fishing is the most serious cause for concern and we devoted a lot of effort to examining the very interesting proposals put forward by the salmon sales group of the former National Water Council for a salmon tagging scheme to tackle the poaching problem. Unfortunately, that proved to present too many difficulties to be viable. We therefore brought forward a proposal to tackle the trade in illegally caught salmon by making it an offence to possess or handle salmon, believing or having reason to suspect that it was illegally taken, and backed this up with a proposal to licence salmon dealers, who would be required to keep suitable records.

Both these proposals are enshrined in the Salmon Bill which is currently before the House, together with other proposals to improve further the regulation and management of salmon fisheries.

Intervention Board (Headquarters)

Mr. Silvester asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider Manchester as the new site for the EEC Intervention Board headquarters.

Mr. Jopling: If a move were proposed, the merits of alternative locations, including the north of England, would be considered.

Wheat

Mr. Chope asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what was the subsidy per tonne on wheat produced in the United Kingdom in 1983, 1984 and in 1985;

(2) what was the total subsidy on wheat produced in the United Kingdom in 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Gummer: There are no subsidies paid directly to producers for cereals production. The market prices of wheat in the United Kingdom are supported by means of a system of intervention purchases, levies on imports and refunds on exports. Details of this expenditure can be found in the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce's annual report for 1983 and 1984. The report for 1985 is due to be published in June.

Mr. Chope asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to which countries Britain exported wheat in the last five financial years; and what was the total quantity and value per country in each year.

Mr. Gummer: I will reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Chope asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what was the percentage levy on imported wheat for the last financial year; and what is the levy in the current financial year;

(2) what was the percentage levy on imported maize for the last financial year; and what is the levy in the current financial year.

Mr. Gummer: Rates of import levy are set daily by the European Commission. The levy is a specific amount representing the difference between world prices and EC threshold prices. Simple averages of the daily rates applicable on imports of common wheat into the United Kingdom from third countries during the period April 1984 to March 1985 and April 1985 to mid-March 1986 were £48/tonne and £75/tonne respectively. The corresponding figures for maize were £37/tonne and £62/tonne. These figures are net of the United Kingdom monetary compensatory amounts.

Grain Exports

Mr. Chope asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total value of grain exports in the last financial year; and how this compares with the value of grain retained for home consumption.

Mr. Gummer: The value of grain exported from the United Kingdom in the period April 1984 to March 1985 was £637 million. The value of grain exported from April 1985 to the end of January 1986 was £434 million. Comparable data for grain retained for home consumption are not available. Information on the value of total cereals output is, however, set out in table 22 of the annual review of agriculturue White Paper (Cmnd. 9708).

Subsidies

Mr. Chope asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total amount of agricultural subsidies for the last financial year and the estimated amounts for 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Gummer: Public expenditure in the United Kingdom on market support under the CAP, national market support and structural measures for agriculture, as set out in table 3.4 of the Government's expenditure plans 1986-87 to 1988-89 (Cmnd. 9702) is as follows:

	Year	*£ million*
Outturn	1984-85	1,694
Estimated outturn	1985-86	2,154
Planned	1986-87	1,753

WALES

Welsh Development Agency

3. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total expenditure of the Welsh Development Agency since its inception.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: From 1 January 1976 to 31 March 1986 gross expenditure by the Welsh Development Agency will have totalled some £624 million.

Labour Statistics

13. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the most recent unemployment figures for Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: In February 1986 the seasonally adjusted number of unemployed people in Wales was 176,900.

British Rail

14. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received about the performance of British Rail in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has received 20 such representations in the last year, most of them concerning services in north Wales.

15. **Mr. Barry Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were unemployed for more than one year in *(a)* Clwyd and *(b)* Wales in (i) March 1979 and (ii) 1986 at the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: In January 1986, the number of claimants unemployed for more than a year in Wales and Clwyd were 78,014 and 10,128, respectively. Figures available for 1979 cannot properly be compared with these since they relate to numbers registered, but were 22,844 for Wales and 4,117 for Clwyd.

Machynlleth Chest Hospital

16. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from Powys health authority about additional funds for Machynlleth chest hospital.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I have not received any representations on the subject from Powys health authority.

Education

17. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what recent steps he has taken to improve the standard of state education in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Current policies were set out in the White Paper "Better Schools" and are progressively being carried into effect.

Chirk and Ruabon Bypass

18. **Mr. Harvey** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what the present timetable is for completion of the Chirk and Ruabon bypass; and whether there are any plans for a dual carriageway along the A483.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The estimated opening date of the Ruabon bypass is autumn 1987. The timing of the Chirk bypass depends on the National Coal Board's proposals to undertake opencast mining on the intended line of the road. The Ruabon and Gresford-Pulford bypasses will be dual carriageway. The Newbridge and Chirk bypasses will be single carriageway.

University Hospital

19. **Dr. Roger Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will enumerate the departments with the University Hospital of Wales that have received extra funding during the current financial year to meet technological medical advances.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The following departments at the University Hospital of Wales have received extra funding from my Department during the current financial year to meet technological medical advances:

Cardiac Surgery	Sterile Products Unit
Cardiology	Child Health
Assay Service	Medical Microbiology
Drug Information Service	Medical Biochemistry
Haematology	
Orthopaedics	

Part of the district health authority allocations also includes an element for new technology and is in turn built in to university departmental budgets. This item cannot be identified specifically.

South Glamorgan Health Authority

21. **Mr. Gwilym Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what cuts he has imposed on South Glamorgan health authority in 1985-86 and for 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: None. On the contrary, the initial revenue allocation of £127 million notified to South Glamorgan for 1985-86 represents a cash increase of 4·6 per cent. over the previous year. In 1986-87 South Glamorgan will receive an initial allocation of £135 million, which represents a cash increase of 5·6 per cent. over its 1985-86 provision.

Nurses' Homes

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy that no nurses' homes should be sold in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: It is the Government's policy that the NHS in Wales should provide accomodation for staff only where there is no reasonable alternative. Every effort should be made to sell surplus property and to use the proceeds to improve services to patients.

Rural Areas (Support)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales what support is available from Government sources for the development of rural areas in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: A very extensive range of assistance is provided by the Government and their various agencies towards developments in rural Wales. I am today publishing a document which sets out in detail what is already on offer. The document also describes a new grant scheme (development of rural initiative, venture and enterprise—DRIVE) which is being introduced by the Welsh Development Agency and Mid Wales Development. One million pounds is being made available over the next two years for this scheme, the aim of which is to stimulate private sector investment in services, tourism related, leisure and craft projects in rural areas. The two agencies will consult and collaborate with the Wales Tourist Board in respect of applications which have a tourism dimension. Some to the existing schemes operated by the Welsh Development Agency and Mid Wales Develoment are also being extended or streamlined; and the total package is to be marketed under the label "Rural Enterprise". Government agencies will continue to work with local enterprise agencies where these exist. Efforts will also be made to establish on a pilot basis and in a few areas rural enterprise groups which will be encouraged to identify and bring forward ideas for development within their own communities. This new initiative underlines the commitment of the Government to the continued development of rural Wales.

A copy of the document being published today has been placed in the Library.

Derelict Land

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each county in Wales the amount of derelict land, in hectares, in *(a)* 1974 and *(b)* the latest available date; and if he will indicate the number of hectares of land restored by each county for the corresponding period.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Figures are not available for 1974, but the amount of derelict land in 1972 when the last survey was undertaken was as follows:

1972

	Hectares
Clwyd	1,177
Dyfed	2,113
Gwent	2,762
Gwynedd	1,968
Mid Glamorgan	3,631
Powys	665
South Glamorgan	508
West Glamorgan	1,658
Total	14,482

Detailed information is not available for the amount of derelict land at present, but the Welsh Development Agency's assessment, taking account of land reclaimed and new dereliction, is that the overall amount of dereliction remains broadly the same.

Figures are not available by county since 1972 but the area of derelict land reclaimed in the period since 1975 is as follows:

Area Reclaimed

	Hectares
Clwyd	151
Dyfed	244
Gwent	767
Gwynedd	81
Mid Glamorgan	734
Powys	17
South Glamorgan	102
West Glamorgan	449
Total	2,545

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the distribution of derelict land in Wales in *(a)* 1974 and *(b)* the most recent available date, by the following categories: (i) spoil heaps, (ii) excavation and pits, (iii) military and so on dereliction, (iv) derelict railway land, (v) other forms of dereliction and (vi) total.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information is not available in the form requested. A survey of derelict land in Wales was carried out in 1972 and this identified some 14,000 hectares of derelict land of which about 50 per cent. was thought to be attributable to coal mining activities. The latest estimate by the WDA, taking account of land reclaimed and new dereliction, is that the overall amount of dereliction remains broadly the same.

Schools Inspectors

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to increase the proportion of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools employed in Wales who have experience of teaching in primary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has no plans to increase the proportion of Her Majesty's inspectors who have experience of teaching in primary schools.

In making appointments to the inspectorate a balance is sought between the requirements to cover all the main subject areas of instruction and phases of education. In addition to individuals appointed, who have experience of primary schools teaching, most of those who enter the inspectorate from teacher training posts have had regular contact with primary schools in their former posts and others have had experience of visiting primary schools as LEA advisers or officers. The great majority of Her Majesty's inspectors have acquired within the inspectorate substantial experience of primary schools through inspection visits.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the most recent information relating to Her Majesty's inspectors of schools' reports on schools supplied to him in accordance with paragraph 7 of his Department's circular 11/83; and if he will make it his policy to publish all such information in future.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: It is not the Department's policy to publish such information, which remains confidential to the Department and the local education authorities concerned. It would be for individual local education authorities in Wales to decide whether they would be agreeable to their response to reports made by Her Majesty's inspectors of schools being published.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if any of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools in Wales have had no experience of teaching in schools.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Five of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools in Wales have no experience of teaching in schools.

M4 (Parking Areas)

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has for the provision of parking areas along the M4 motorway within Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Parking provision for drivers using the M4 already exists at the Sarn and Pont Abraham service areas. It is our policy to encourage the provision of service areas at intervals of roughly 25 miles.

Employment Statistics

Mr. Rowlands asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will give the corresponding Welsh figures for those in employment and the increase and decrease of employment in Wales, to those given for Great Britain in table 3.11 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1986-87."

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Figures for self-employment and Her Majesty's forces' employment are not available for Wales for September. The following table therefore applies to June each year (1 July in the case of Her Majesty's forces).

Employment estimates
Thousands, change in Wales (not seasonally adusted)
Employees in employment

	Male	Female full-time	Female part-time	Self employed*	Her Majesty's forces†	Employed labour force
June 1983 to June 1984	−7	+8	+3	+19	0	+23
June 1984 to June 1985	−9	−3	+6	+10	0	+4

* 1985 figure is a forecast based on 1981-84 rate of increase.
† Based in Wales at 1 July each year.

SCOTLAND

Private Legislation Procedures

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has had any discussions with the Scottish Law Commission on the Scottish private legislation procedures.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no discussions with the Scottish Law Commission on these matters. He is, however, aware that in its 19th and 20th reports (Scottish Law Commission 89, paragraph 3.49, and Scottish Law Commission 98, paragraph 2.50) the Commission has recorded that it is to provide information on the practical working of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936 to the joint working party of the Law Commissions on local statute law in England and Wales and in Scotland.

Motor Vehicles (Theft)

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prosecutions there have been in Scotland for theft of a motor vehicle in each of the last three years; and how many have been successful.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is given in the table below:

Theft of motor vehicles in Scotland

	1982	1983	1984
Persons proceeded against	4,427	4,205	4,080
Persons against whom a charge was proved	3,804	3,617	3,409

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many motor vehicles have been reported stolen in Scotland in each of the last three years; and how many of these subsequently have been recovered.

Mr. John MacKay: The latest available information in respect of thefts of motor vehicles is set out below. No information on the number of motor vehicles recovered is collected centrally.

Theft of motor vehicles in Scotland

Year	Number recorded
1982	32,965
1983	29,888
1984	32,557

State Hospital, Carstairs

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients there are at present in the State hospital, Carstairs, subject to a restriction order whose transfer to an ordinary National Health Service hospital he has authorised; how long each of them has been waiting for such a transfer; and what steps he is taking to facilitate their transfer.

Mr. Rifkind: There are at present three patients in the state hospital subject to restriction orders whose transfer to an ordinary mental hospital I have approved. One patient has been waiting for a suitable place in another hospital for two months since my approval was given for his transfer; a second patient has been waiting for three weeks to be transferred; and the transfer of the third patient has only been approved within the past week. I expect all three patients to be transferred from the state hospital during the next month or so.

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients there are at present in the State hospital, Carstairs, not subject to a restriction order whose transfer to an ordinary National Health Service hospital has been approved; in how many of these cases an ordinary National Health Service hospital has agreed in principle to a transfer; in how many cases an agreement in principle is still being sought;; how long each patient in each category has been waiting for transfer; and what steps he is taking to facilitate their transfer.

Mr. Rifkind: This information is as follows:

(1) Number of patients in the State Hospital not subject to a restriction order whose transfer to an ordinary National Health Service hospital has been approved: 16.

(2) Number of cases included under (1) where an ordinary National Health Service hospital has agreed in principle to a transfer: 4.

(3) Number of cases included under (1) where agreement in principle is still being sought: 12.

(4) Length of time in months each patient included under (2) has been waiting for transfer: 1, 6, 30, 32.

(5) Length of time in months each patient included under (3) has been waiting for transfer: 1(2 patients), 2, 3, 8, 9, 10 (2 patients), 16 (2 patients), 22, 31.

Responsibility for the transfer of patients in the state hospital who are not under a restriction order rests with their responsible medical officer and the medical sub-committee. During the past year 70 patients were assessed as suitable to be transferred or discharged from the state hospital, and most of these were placed without any difficulty. A minority of patients cannot be transferred very easily for various reasons. Every effort is made by the state hospital to transfer patients who have been waiting to leave the hospital for some time.

Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to the protest by

Care in the Community—Scottish Working Group at the Government's proposal to seek to remove clause 8 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill; if he will publish its submission; what action he is taking in response to it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend is giving careful consideration to the numerous responses he has received from interested parties in Scotland to the Government's proposals for amending the Bill as contained in a consultation document issued on 14 February 1986. Copies of these responses have been sent to members of the Standing Committee which considered the Bill earlier this year and further copies are available for consultation by the public in the Scottish Office library in St. Andrew's house, Edinburgh.

Our conclusions in the light of these consultations will be communicated to the Bill's sponsors as soon as possible.

Teachers (Pay and Conditions)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is yet in a position to announce the members of the committee which will conduct the inquiry into teachers' pay and conditions.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to do so shortly.

Macaulay Institute for Soil Research

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if it is his intention to have further full and public consultations on the feasibility study being conducted into the proposed closure of the Aberdeen-based Macaulay Institute for Soil Research before making a final decision on the matter; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he expects to be in a position to publish the results of the feasibility study into the proposals to close the Aberdeen-based Macaulay Institute for Soil Research; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend will not make his decision on the future location of the new institute to be formed by the merger of the Hill Farming Research Organisation with parts of the Macaulay Institute for Soil Research until after the report of the feasibility study has been received and considered. In reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on 13 February at column *506*, he said that the report of the study would be made available to interested parties. It is not possible to predict when this will be. He does not anticipate the need for full public consultation on the outcome of the study.

Forestry

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will review the grades of land that can be released for forestry planting.

Mr. Rifkind [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 March 1986, c. *315-16*]: The statement on forestry policy made on 10 December 1980 by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr, at column 1405, said that the Government saw scope for continued planting at broadly the rate of the previous 25 years (about 30,000 hectares per year) and that planting of this order would be compatible with preserving an acceptable balance with agriculture, the environment and other interests. Since 1980, new planting, at about 23,000 hectares a year, has fallen significantly short of this figure. Scotland has been the focus of interest for new planting. I have, accordingly, considered what measures might be taken to facilitate an increased rate of planting that is consistent with maintaining a balance with those other interests.

Policy has long been to encourage forestry planting on the poorer land and to preserve arable land and the better hill land for agriculture. The Government remain committed to a prosperous agricultural industry and in particular to the maintenance of a thriving hill sheep sector, but I believe there is scope for forestry planting in blocks of appropriate size, type and location on land which hitherto would have been reserved for agricultural use. Applications under the Forestry Commission's grant schemes will continue to be considered on their merits through the usual procedures for consultation between the commission and others. In advising the commission on agricultural implications my Department will continue to pay regard to factors such as the quality of land, the viability of the unit and the extent to which forestry proposals integrate with and benefit agriculture. It will also continue to take into account the importance of the land in the agricultural structure of the area. But within this overall framework it will in future acknowledge a presumption in favour in the following cases:

In the case of hill land

(a) where the application is in respect of land not essential to the viability of a unit consisting of unimproved or unsuccessfully improved peats or peaty gleys which although of agricultural potential are not being agriculturally exploited; or

(b) where the application is in respect of land which, although of good quality, is not capable (by virtue of its size, slope or location) of making a significant agricultural contribution; or

(c) where the application, although in respect of land which would not otherwise meet the criteria for clearance, forms part of a plan accepted by the Department which takes account of agriculture and forestry and specifies the continuation of the unit in agricultural use for at least 10 years.

In the case of upland and arable land other than prime land (class 4 or poorer in the land capability classification for agriculture)

(a) where the land forms part of a farm-forestry proposal promoted by the farmer and remains part of his business; or

(b) where the land requires capital and/or maintenance inputs which are high in relation to the agricultural production achievable.

The Department will maintain a presumption against clearance for afforestation of prime land (LCA classes 1 to 3) except in the case of proposals for small stands for eg. shelter, amenity or sporting purposes.

In appropriate cases other than on prime land clearance will be given to the restoration of opencast coal and mineral sites for forestry as an alternative to agriculture.

The general threshold on hill land below which clearance is not required will be increased from 20 to 40 hectares. Other thresholds on hill and upland farms will remain five hectares for arable and former arable land, for reseeded land and for land consisting

predominantly of better soils and 20 hectacres for land not in these categories. The requirement for clearance will also continue on areas below these thresholds where agricultural grant has been given within the previous two years or where the application forms part of a series of adjacent or connected areas.

These changes will provide the basis for a more flexible approach to new planting proposals while safeguarding essential agricultural interests. It will, however, be no less important to ensure that environmental and other interests are equally safeguarded. There is a general duty on Departments to have regard to the desirability of conserving the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside and the Forestry Commission has a particular duty to endeavour to achieve a reasonable balance between the needs of forestry and the environment. It is already the practice for the Forestry Commission to consult, as appropriate, local planning authorities, the Nature Conservancy Council, the Countryside Commission for Scotland and the Red Deer Commission. Where an objection arising from these consultations cannot be resolved, the matter is put before the Forestry Commission's regional advisory committee, which considers the conflicting arguments and seeks to reconcile them.

This system has worked well but it is now right to consider whether the composition and procedures of these committees could be adjusted to achieve a better balance between forestry and other countryside interests and to improve public accountability. To this end, and in response to the undertaking given in the Government's reply to the Countryside Commission's report "A Better Future for the Uplands", the Forestry Commission is today issuing a consultation paper which seeks comments on a number of proposed changes.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

World Food Programme

Dame Judith Hart asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what pledges were made by Her Majesty's Government at the 12th World Food Programme conference for its regular programme, its international emergency food reserves and its non-food aid, respectively.

Mr. Raison: At the World Food Programme pledging conference on 4 March we expressed our continuing support but, in common with many other major donors, made no specific pledge at the time for the biennium 1987-88. We indicated that we would announce pledges at a later date.

United Nations Special Session (Africa)

Dame Judith Hart asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which Ministers will attend the special session on the critical economic situation in Africa of the General Assembly of the United Nations from 27 to 31 May; and for how long.

Mr. Raison: No decision has yet been taken.

RMS St. Helena

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress in deciding upon a replacement for the RMS St. Helena.

Mr. Raison: I hope to be in a position to make a firm decision later this year.

EMPLOYMENT

Young Workers Scheme

Mr. Speller asked the Paymaster General if he will extend the period of eligibility for entry to the young workers scheme from 31 March until 30 September.

Mr. Lang: No, but the new workers scheme, proposed by the Chancellor in his Budget statement, will from 1 April provide help to under 21-year-olds in their first year of employment by giving employers a positive financial incentive to recruit them.

Working Population

Mr. Best asked the Paymaster General what is the estimated demographic change in the number of those eligible for work in each of the next 10 years.

Mr. Lang: Projected annual changes in the Great Britain population of working age (all those above minimum school leaving age and below state retirement age) are as follows:

Projected annual change in population of working age*

	Numbers
1986	+88,000
1987	+117,000
1988	+92,000
1989	+42,000
1990	−6,000
1991	−26,000
1992	−34,000
1993	−49,000
1994	−37,000
1995	+9,000

* Figures relate to the year ending in June of the year shown.

Coventry

Mr. Park asked the Paymaster General how many full-time vacancies were available at Coventry careers office at the latest available date.

Mr. Lang: On 7 February 1986, the latest date for which vacancy figures are available, there were 42 unfilled full-time vacancies at Coventry careers office.

Mr. Park asked the Paymaster General what proportion of the work force in Coventry were unemployed in 1979; and what is the proportion unemployed at the present time.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. On 6 February 1986 the unemployment rate for the Coventry and Hinckley travel-to-work area was 15·6 per cent. Comparable rates for 1979 are not available because of changes in the way figures are collected. However, in February 1979 the unemployment rate for registrants in the old Coventry travel-to-work area was 6·5 per cent.

Mr. Park asked the Paymaster General how many people in Coventry, having successfully completed a YTS course, have found work.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission conducts a regular follow-up survey of young people some three months after they leave YTS. The latest results cover young people who left YTS between April and September 1985. They show that 60 per cent. of those young people who completed YTS in the Coventry local authority district were in work.

Mr. Park asked the Paymaster General how many businesses have been set up in Coventry under the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Trippier: In the Coventry area 3,115 people have set up in business with the help of the enterprise allowance scheme since January 1982.

Mr. Park asked the Paymaster General how many Coventry men and women over 50 years of age have been unemployed for more than one year, two years and three years, respectively.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. The figures relate to unemployed claimants on 9 January 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age and duration is available.

The table shows the numbers of male claimants and female claimants aged 50 years and over in the Coventry local authority district who have been unemployed for the durations specified.

Numbers of unemployed male and female claimants aged 50 years and over in the Coventry local authority district (9 January 1986)

Duration of unemployment	*Males*	*Females*
More than one year	2,155	690
More than two years	1,634	468
More than three years	1,253	324

Mr. Park asked the Paymaster General what is his estimate of the number of young people in Coventry likely to be affected by their removal from the protection of wages councils; and how many new jobs are likely to be created by this measure in Coventry.

Mr. Trippier: Information is not available on a local basis about the number of young people within scope of wages councils. Whilst we are not aware of any studies which estimate the number of jobs which will arise from the specific reforms we have proposed, there are many studies which provide evidence of the link between pay and jobs or indicate that statutory minima affect employment. The removal of regulations which prevent employers offering jobs at rates which young people would accept must result in increased employment, in Coventry as elsewhere.

Mr. Park asked the Paymaster General what new initiatives will be undertaken to fight unemployment in Coventry.

Mr. Lang: Coventry will benefit from the new package of measures announced in the Budget statement at columns *166-184*.

In particular, there is the boost to enterprise. The enterprise allowance scheme will be increased to help 100,000 unemployed people a year nationally; and small firms will benefit from the extension and improvement to the small firms loan guarantee scheme and the business expansion scheme.

To help young people, the two year YTS starting on 1 April will provide 16 and 17-year-old school leavers with high quality training leading to a recognised qualification. The new workers scheme will help 18 to 20-year-olds to find work.

To help the long-term unemployed the new national Restart programme will provide counselling on job opportunities; the jobstart allowance will give unemployed people a financial incentive to return to work; and the community programme is to be improved and expanded to 255,000 places nationally by November 1986.

Coventry already derives considerable benefit from our employment and training measures which are currently helping nearly 10,000 people in Coventry and Warwickshire. However, the main impact on unemployment must come from employers and those who decide to work for themselves. It is their drive towards competitiveness, profitability and keeping costs down that will provide new jobs in Coventry and elsewhere.

Mr. Park asked the Paymaster General how many places have been taken up in the YTS in Coventry over the last three years; and how many places have been allocated for the two-year scheme.

Mr. Trippier: There have been some 9,309 entrants to YTS in the Coventry local authority district between the inception of YTS in April 1983 and the end of February 1986. This figure includes some young people who have entered YTS more than once.

Approximately 3,900 places have been allocated to the Coventry local authority district for the two-year scheme.

Departmental Budgeting

Mr. Thurnham asked the Paymaster General if he plans to issue a strategic overview paper to all staff in his Department in line with the recommendation of the final report on multi-department review of budgeting of December 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: This recommendation appears in my Department's own report, which was one of a number of such studies undertaken as part of the multidepartmental review. We will be considering the specific recommendations in the report in the light of those made by the central team when its report is also issued. A statement of the aims of the Department of Employment Group already appears in the latest public expenditure survey White Paper and I am considering whether to develop a further statement of departmental objectives.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Kennedy asked the Paymaster General if, further to the answer to the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye of 13 March, *Official Report*, column 546, he will give some indication of the regional distribution within Scotland of each of the following categories from the labour force survey relevant to the spring of 1984: *(a)* previously self-employed people without jobs and seeking work who were excluded from the unemployment count, *(b)* previously self-employed claimants included in the count who were not actively looking for work, and *(c)* claimants who did some paid work in the reference week and said they were self-employed.

Mr. Lang: The information is not available for the areas requested because of the possible sampling error on the small numbers involved.

Labour Market

Sir David Price asked the Paymaster General what was the demographic imbalance in each of the last three years between those seeking to enter the labour market and those retiring from it; and what are the similar projections for each of the next three years.

Mr. Lang: The table gives estimates and projections of the numbers of entries to, and exits from, the Great Britain population of working age.

	*Entries** *(thousands)*	*Exits†* *(thousands)*	*Net increase* *(thousands)*
1983‡	902	652	+250
1984	873	611	+262
1985	866	763	+103
1986	836	748	+ 88
1987	845	728	+117
1988	792	700	+ 92

* Those reaching minimum school leaving age in the 12 months to the end of June.
† Mainly those reaching state retirement age, but also including deaths of persons of working age and the net effects of migration.
‡ Figures relate to the year ending in June of the year shown.

Farming Accidents

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General (1) pursuant to his answer of 10 March, *Official Report*, column 344, if he will provide a breakdown by regions in Great Britain of those farm employees injured or killed in accidents in each of the years 1983, 1984 and 1985;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 10 March, *Official Report*, column 345, if he will provide a breakdown by regions in Great Britain of those cases brought against self-employed farmers and employers of agricultural labour for infringement of safety standards in each of the last three years for which figures are available; and what was the percentage of convictions in each year.

Mr. Trippier: Information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Agricultural Employment

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General what evidence he has about the trend in standards of safety in agricultural employment over the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Figures for major injuries reported to the Health and Safety Executive in agriculture are:

	Employees	*Non-employees*	*Total*
1981	148	43	191
1982	135	38	173
1983	183	51	234
1984	251	51	302

Major injuries in this industry are notably subject to under-reporting and some of the increase may reflect an increased propersity to report.

Fatalities reported to HSE in agriculture are:

	Employees	*Non-employees*	*Total*
1981	31	38	69
1982	27	39	66
1983	26	28	64
1984	26	30	66

Comparable figures before 1981 are not available for either major injuries and fatalities.

While the figures for fatalities show some decline the trend in major injuries continues to cause concern and is being kept under careful review.

Job Start Scheme

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General how many unemployed persons have joined the job start scheme in each of the pilot areas where it operates.

Mr. Lang: On 14 March, the latest date for which figures are available, a total of 93 applications for the job start allowance had been accepted. The numbers in each pilot area were as follows:

	Numbers
Dundee	10
Billingham	1
Preston	18
Huddersfield	10
Stoke	18
Port Talbot and Neath	18
Plymouth	11
Crawley/Horsham	5
Ealing	2
Total	93

TRANSPORT

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the traffic and revenue study undertaken for the Channel Tunnel Group by Wilbur Smith Associates in connection with its successful proposal for a Channel fixed link.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. The study of traffic and revenue carried out jointly by Wilbur Smith and Associates and SETEC-Economic for Channel Tunnel Group—France-Manche remains the property of CTG-FM, and it is for them to decide how much of this information should be made publicly available.

National Traffic Club

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress towards the establishment of a national traffic club for pre-school children.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department invited a number of private organisations to submit proposals for the formation, long-term organisation, financing and promotion of a national traffic club. We will consider whether any of them provides a sound basis for the establishment of a traffic club on a national scale.

Glasgow Airport

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he proposes that Glasgow airport should be developed as a gateway airport.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. The Government's policy, set out in the airports policy White Paper, published in June 1985 (Cmnd. 9542), is that Prestwick should serve the whole of Scotland as the Gateway international airport for long-haul (primarily transatlantic) services, but if Prestwick's financial results did not improve, the policy would be reviewed in 1989.

Humber Bridge

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest available figure for the debt on the Humber bridge; what has been the increase in debt since the bridge was opened; what are the latest available annual figures for revenue and debt charges; and what proposals he has for paying off the debt.

Mr. David Mitchell: The information requested is as follows:

	£ million rounded
Total debt at 31 March 1985	233
Increase in debt since date of opening	82
Revenue for 1984-85	5
Debt charges for 1984-85	27

The Humber Bridge Board has been invited to come forward with proposals for putting Humber bridge finances on a sound footing. When these are received, consideration will be given to what further action may be necessary.

A19 (Accident Statistics)

Mr. Dormand asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the number of deaths and serious accidents, respectively, that have occurred in each of the years 1983, 1984 and 1985, on the A19 road.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information is as follows:

Accidents on the A19, by severity, 1983 and 1984

	Fatal	*Serious*
1983	10	118
1984	12	105

Numbers for 1985 are not yet available. Further details for the trunk road sections of the A19 can be found in table 8 of the 1983 and 1984 edictions of "Road Accident Statistics English Regions," copies of which are in the Library.

Ross-on-Wye (Goods Vehicles)

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to give his consent to the proposed order to prohibit goods vehicles in excess of 7·5 tonnes gross from travelling through Ross-on-Wye on the A40.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Consent has now been given to the order which is to be made by Hereford and Worcester county council.

South Africa/Southampton (Trade)

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish figures showing the volume and value of seaborne trade between the Republic of South Africa and Southampton for the last five years for which statistics are available.

Mr. Ridley: The information requested is as follows:

United Kingdom Seaborne Trade with South Africa through Southampton 1981-1985

	Imports		*Exports*	
	Tonnes '000s	*Value £ million*	*Tonnes '000s*	*Value £ million*
1981†	136	147	190	361
1982	232	220	278	585
1983	270	307	328	706
1984	202	265	297	630
1985*	189	193	158	329

* Provisional.
† includes Namibia.
1981, 1984 and 1985 traffic levels were affected by strikes at Southampton during which its share of the trade with South Africa switched to other ports.

British Airways

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport what were the gross and net profits of British Airways in the financial years ended 1982 to 1985 inclusive; if he will give the percentage of the airline which was privately owned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: British Airways' operating results and retained profits were as follows:

£ million

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Operating result	11·8	185·1	267·7	292·1
Retained profit/(loss) after extraordinary items	(544·2)	88·6	214·5	176·1

The airline was wholly owned by the Government throughout this period.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received any request from British Airways for permission or financial help in purchasing or ordering new aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has approved the acquisition of seven new aircraft during the last 12 months. No requests for approval are outstanding and none has been turned down. British Airways meets all its investment requirements from internal resources or from finance made available on commercial terms.

Bermuda 2 Agreement

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is causing the delay in a settlement of the Bermuda 2 agreement; when he expects to conclude an agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Negotiations are taking place with the United States Government about a replacement for the capacity annex (Annex 2) of the Bermuda 2 air

services agreement. This annex is due to expire in July of this year. I hope that agreement on new provisions can be reached soon.

Motor Vehicles (Security)

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make central locking devices compulsory on all new motor cars manufactured in Great Britain.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. Central locking is being considered by a committee of the British Standards Institution which is producing a standard on car security.

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he is having with motor manufacturers with a view to separate panels of motor vehicles being indelibly marked for identification purposes as a security against theft.

Mr. Ridley: None. The marking of glass in new vehicles is, however, being considered by a committee of the British Standards Institution which is producing a standard on car security. I am not aware of any plans to extend this to other vehicle components.

North Sea (Helicopters)

Mr. Eadie asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the priority accorded to safety considerations in the drawing up of recent contracts for helicopter use in the North sea oil and gas industry; and to what extent his Department is involved in such contracts.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Contracts for the use of helicopters in the North sea oil and gas industry are a matter for the contracting parties only. Helicopter operators are required to comply with public transport safety regulations laid down by the Civil Aviation Authority, which is statutorily responsible for aviation safety.

Mr. Eadie asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what information he has in relation to the safety of landing of helicopters on alternative landings in the North sea; and what is the fuel margin specified to enable helicopters to land onshore;

(2) if he will list the offshore oil rigs designated as alternative landing sites for helicopters; and how he satisfies himself that the risk of helicopters having to ditch in the sea will be safeguarded by such a practice.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Civil aviation safety is a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority. The authority has informed me that it expects its study into the risks involved in the use of offshore diversions for helicopters to be completed in mid-April and a paper to be available in May.

The CAA tells me that the nomination of offshore alternates is practised by only one of the four major North sea operators at present pending the conclusions on safety to be drawn from the authority's study. Irrespective of whether a nominated alternate is situated onshore or offshore, the fuel to be carried must not be less that that required to fly to the destination and thence to the alternate, plus an appropriate fuel reserve.

The CAA also tells me that any offshore rig classified as unrestricted for use by helicopters by the authority may be nominated as an alternate provided the helicopter operator first ensures for each flight that the rig is available and that the weather there is forecast to be satisfactory.

Liner Shipping Freight Rates

Mr. Higgins asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to publish the report by officials on the inquiry into liner shipping freight rates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: The report was published today and copies have been placed in the Library.

The report was commissioned in response to complaints from British exporters that they were being disadvantaged in overseas markets by disparities between the levels of deep sea freight rates available to them and those available to their European competitors.

The study has established that, while significant disparities existed in 1984, this was by no means the case in all foreign trades, and that the problem tended to be more widespread for conventional cargo than for containerised cargo.

These rate disparities are attributable to higher United Kingdom port costs and to the much sharper competition in the supply of liner services which undoubtedly exists on the continent compared with the United Kingdom. This enhanced competition stems largely from the greater participation of independent shipping lines, and the strength of the freight forwarding industry in mainland Europe.

The report draws attention to the important role for Government in helping to ensure that liner trades to and from the United Kingdom remain open and in maintaining the scope for independent lines to offer fair and effective competition to conference lines. It recognises the major technological innovation undertaken by shipping lines, which has been of widespread benefit. The report encourages a wider role for freight forwarders and suggests steps which shippers themselves can take to control their transport costs and so help win vital orders overseas.

I hope that the report will now lead to further discussion and consideration by all sides of the industry—shippers, forwarders and the lines themselves. Liner shipping worldwide is in a dynamic phase of its development and I share the study team's conclusion that United Kingdom liner shipping companies are well-placed to meet the challenges facing them and to respond positively to their customers' requirements.

Airports Bill

Mr. Silvester asked the Secretary of State for Transport what number of passengers he intends to regard as substantial in relation to clause 28, subsection *(b)*, of the Airports Bill.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The number would vary from one group of airports to another. There are already two airport systems where traffic distribution policy is applied: in the London airports system some 75 per cent. of air passengers, and in the Scottish lowlands airports system over 90 per cent. of air passengers, have their ultimate origins or destinations in the south-east of England and in Scotland, respectively.

Chatteris Bypass

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement on the state of progress of the Chatteris bypass; and if he will list any recent representations he has received in opposition to the bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Chatteris eastern bypass is a scheme for which Cambridgeshire county council is the highway authority. It made the necessary orders on 27 January 1986. The other objection period expired on 19 March. There have been 21 objections, eight of them from statutory objectors. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will accordingly be arranging a public inquiry unless these objections are withdrawn in the meantime.

Road Safety Programmes

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements are being made by his regional offices in conjunction with successor bodies for the co-ordination of road safety programmes including accident, investigation and prevention work, after 1 April 1986 in (i) West Yorkshire, (ii) West Midlands, (iii) Greater Manchester, (iv) Tyne and Wear, (v) Merseyside and (vi) South Yorkshire; and if he will name the successor bodies in each of these metropolitan areas.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall answer this question shortly.

Stansted Airport

Mr. Silvester asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now provide information in relation to Stansted airport comparable with that for other airports listed in table 16 of " United Kingdom Airports".

Mr. Michael Spicer: The information on the origins and destinations of air passengers in relation to Stansted airport will be included in the next edition of "United Kingdom Airports", which the Civil Aviation Authority expects to publish shortly.

British Rail

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Transport what level of public service obligation grant will be available to British Rail for 1986-87.

Mr. David Mitchell: In October 1983 we set the British Railways Board the object of reducing, over three years, its requirement for public service obligation grant to £635 million in 1983 prices. This target is now £736 million at 1986-87 prices, so I am setting the board a cash ceiling for this grant in 1986-87 of £736 million to reflect that. Meeting the target will have meant reducing the level of grant by more than one quarter, and this reflects the considerable progress which Sir Robert Reid, his board, and railwaymen have made to improving the financial effectiveness of the railway.

Marine Pilotage

Mr. Sayeed asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has considered the recommendations made by the Transport Committee in its report on marine pilotage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I have now considered the report of the House of Commons Transport Committee on marine pilotage. The Committee's report contains a careful analysis of this complex subject, and, together with the minutes of evidence and appendices, provides a most useful source of information about it. I welcome in particular the Committee's recognition of the need for urgent reform of the present administrative structure of pilotage, and its endorsement of the central proposal in the Green Paper which I published in December 1984, that pilotage should become the responsibility of harbour authorities.

The report contains 26 main recommendations. The Government's responses to these recommendations are contained in a detailed memorandum of which I have placed a copy in the Library. The memorandum is also being sent to the principal bodies interested in pilotage: further copies are available on request from the Department of Transport.

In considering how to take forward the reform of pilotage administration, I have taken careful account of the many comments received in response to the Green Paper, and I am grateful to all those who responded. Having considered these responses, and the Committee's report, I can confirm that I intend to introduce legislation as soon as possible to provide for the transfer of pilotage responsibility to harbour authorities, for the abolition of the existing pilotage authorities and the Pilotage Commission, and for the repeal of most of the present complex legislative provisions governing pilotage. The legislation will provide for a statutory compensation scheme to be available for pilots whose services will no longer be required under the new regime. Further details of the Government's proposals are included in the memorandum.

As the Transport Committee noted, a number of draft byelaws and pilotage orders were prepared by pilotage authorities, with the aim of securing reorganisation under the existing legislation. These were submitted to my Department, but in view of objections that were raised against them by the various interested parties, and because of the developing uncertainty about the future of pilotage administration, my predecessors and I have taken decisions on very few of them. Following my announcement that the Government intend to proceed with early legislation the Department of Transport will now return the outstanding orders and byelaws to the authorities, and will invite them to consider whether they still wish to promote them, in whole or in part, so that they can take effect during the interim period before the new arrangements can come into effect.

In considering any orders or draft byelaws which are resubmitted, or submitted for the first time, I will be minded to approve proposals consistent with the policies outlined in the Government's response to the recommendations of the Transport Committee. I will also seek the views of the local harbour authority, or authorities, on whether the proposals in question are consistent with the pilotage regime which the authority is likely to introduce following implementation of the legislation, and I will give due weight to those views.

Foreign-registered Aircraft

Mr. Churchill asked the Secretary of State for Transport to what extent Dassault Falcon aircraft used by

Flight Refuelling Ltd. in respect of a Royal Navy contract meet the required Civil Aviation Authority standards of operation; what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that, in the absence of any approved operations manual, the authority is able adequately to monitor the operations of these aircraft; and what is his policy towards future public sector contracts let on the basis of fleets of foreign-registered aircraft which do not have to comply with the air navigation orders.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The aircraft being used by Flight Refuelling Ltd. are registered in the USA and technically it falls to the Federal Aviation Authority to supervise their operation. The Civil Aviation Authority has, however, suggested to the FAA that the CAA should exercise supervision. New contracts to be let by the Ministry of Defence to civilian operators will include a condition requiring operators of foreign-registered aircraft to satisfy the CAA they can undertake work safely and competently.

My right hon. Friend's permission is required under the Air Navigation Order 1985 before a foreign-registered aircraft can be used in the United Kingdom for public transport. My Department will shortly be consulting the industry on a proposal to amend the order so that permission is also needed before foreign-registered aircraft can undertake any form of aerial work in the United Kingdom. Such an amendment would mean that, where necessary, the CAA could then directly supervise operators of foreign aircraft undertaking aerial work in this country.

Dawn Waters (Loss)

Mr. Harris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the circumstances surrounding the loss of the fishing vessel Dawn Waters off the Isle of Man on 20 March; if he will institute a public inquiry into the causes of the loss; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: The Dawn Waters was a fishing vessel registered in Jersey. She had been operating out of Fleetwood and reports suggest she was carrying a crew of five persons. The vessel was discovered at 9.18 am 11 miles east of Clay Head in the Isle of Man, almost completely submerged. Two life rafts from the vessel were found nearby but they contained no survivors. One body in a lifejacket was recovered. After an exhaustive search of the area by helicopters, lifeboats and other vessels nothing more was found. The search was terminated at 2.30 pm on 20 March. The weather at the time was severe.

The authorities in Jersey have requested my Department to undertake an investigation into the cause of this loss, to which I have agreed. A decision on whether a public inquiry is warranted will be made following consideration of the inspector's report.

I would like to express my deepest sympathy to the families and relatives of those who lost their lives in the tragic loss of this vessel.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Primary Pupils (Swimming)

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what provisions will be made for teaching swimming to primary pupils in the light of the South Eastern Education and Library Board's elimination of the swimming programme.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department of Education for Northern Ireland has not yet received details of the south-eastern board's spending plans for 1986-87, but I understand it is the board's intention to discontinue the school swimming programme from the beginning of the 1986-87 school year. Schools already arrange swimming sessions for children outside the board's programme and I hope that many of these arrangements will continue.

Day of Protest

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what information he has on the value of the property damage caused by the day of protest on 3 March;

(2) what information he has on the cost of repairing the damage caused by the day of protest on 3 March.

Mr. Scott: The statutory time limits for claiming compensaton on 3 March have not yet expired. It is therefore too early to give an estimate of the value of the property damage and the cost of repair, up to 14 March, 281 notices of intention to claim compensation for damage caused on 3 March have been served on my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many complaints of intimidation and police misconduct were reported to the Royal Ulster Constabulary in connection with the day of protest on 3 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Two hundred and thirty seven complaints of intimidation were made to the Royal Ulster Constabulary in connection with the day of action on 3 March. In addition, there were 43 complaints regarding police action and 132 complaints regarding police inactivity.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Royal Ulster Constabulary officers were on duty on Monday 3 March; how many were off duty but could have been called to duty at short notice; and if he will list the occasions in the past five years when the same number of officers were on duty.

Mr. Scott: All available Royal Ulster Constabulary officers were on duty on Monday 3 March. Rest days, annual leave and some elements of training were cancelled to ensure optimum use of resources.

Information relating to the occasions in the past five years when the same number of officers were on duty is not readily available, and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Assembly

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will set the date for 1986 elections for the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Mr. Scott: The Prime Minister has offered to talk to the Northern Ireland political parties, among other matters, about the future of the Assembly. The desirability of new elections must be in doubt if the Assembly's suspension of its statutory duties continues.

Motor Vehicles (Theft)

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many prosecutions there have been in Northern Ireland for theft of a motor vehicle; and how many of these have been successful;

(2) how many motor vehicles have been reported stolen in the Province in each of the last three years; and how many of these subsequently have been recovered.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Action for Community Employment

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for each action for community employment scheme in Northern Ireland *(a)* whether relevent trade union approval has been sought, *(b)* whether it has been obtained and *(c)* where approval has been sought, from which trade union and at what level of the union.

Dr. Boyson: Where appropriate, sponsors must consult trade unions before presenting their proposals to the Department of Economic Development and must give an undertaking that this has been done. Since the introduction of new ACE funding arrangements in December 1985, almost all new proposals have been deemed to involve trade union interests and the necessary undertaking has been obtained. Most trade unions require consultations to take place with full-time officials or headquarters staff.

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for each action for community employment scheme in Northern Ireland *(a)* what rate is being paid to action for community employment workers and *(b)* whether the scheme is being used to (i) replace or (ii) supplement a present statutory provision and, specifying the provision as appropriate.

Dr. Boyson: Sponsors of Action for Community Employment schemes are expected to pay the local going rate for the job. ACE schemes may not be used to replace statutory provision. Public sector sponsors use ACE schemes largely to undertake additional environmental projects and the majority of voluntary sector ACE sponsors, operating in co-operation with public bodies, undertake similar work. In recent months the voluntary sector has shown a particular interest in developing community care projects which are aimed at supplementing existing statutory provision.

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all action for community employment placements in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could only be compiled at disproportionate cost, because there are over 800 ACE sponsors.

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all employer or community organisations presently participating in action for community employment schemes in Northern Ireland and the numbers of action for community employment workers in each case.

Dr. Boyson: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could only be compiled at disproportionate cost, because there are over 800 ACE sponsors.

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the present total level of Government funding of action for community employment schemes in Northern Ireland and the levels of Government funding of each scheme.

Dr. Boyson: The departmental budget for the Action for Community Employment scheme in 1985-86 is £17·75 million. Sponsors are funded on a per capita basis. It is estimated that the average grant per ACE employee in the current year is about £4,559 per annum.

Divis Flats

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what are the total numbers of *(a)* families, *(b)* single parent families, *(c)* single households and *(d)* people of pensionable age or over living in the Divis flats at present; and what were the respective annual totals in each category from 1968 for the years for which figures are available;

(2) what are the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's estimates for the Divis flats of *(a)* the total cost of refurbishing the whole complex, *(b)* the total cost of the combination of refurbishment and demolition currently proposed by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and *(c)* the average cost per dwelling, including loan and interest charges, for refurbishment, given a 30-year estimated life span;

(3) how many statutorily unfit dwellings there are in *(a)* the catchment area for Divis residents and *(b)* West Belfast as a whole;

(4) how many residents in the Divis flats have been subject to action under the Payments for Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) in each year from 1968 to the present;

(5) what are the current levels of arrears and the number of tenants in arrears in payments for *(a)* rents, *(b)* rates and *(c)* heating by type in the Divis complex and the annual averages from 1968 for the years for which figures are available;

(6) what are the number of *(a)* illegal tenancies and *(b)* tenancies for which the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has issued use and occupation books in the Divis complex at the present time; and what are the annual averages of each from 1968 for the years for which figures are available;

(6) what are the figures for the number of dwellings in the Divis complex *(a)* occupied, *(b)* underoccupied, *(c)* overcrowded and *(d)* vacant at the present time; and what was the annual average in each category from 1968 for the years for which figures are available;

(7) what are the average annual costs from 1968 for the years for which figures are available, of *(a)* repairs, *(b)* maintenance and *(c)* services for the Divis flats, each according to (i) total, (ii) emergency work, (iii) normal work, A list and (iv) planned work, B list;

(8) how many residents of the Divis flats have received *(a)* certificated housing benefit, *(b)* housing benefit supplement and *(c)* standard housing benefit since November 1983; and what are the total amounts in each category paid to Divis residents since the introduction of housing benefit;

(9) what are the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's estimates of *(a)* total costs and *(b)* the breakdown of costs for (i) the total demolition of the Divis flats, (ii) the

demolition of the two blocks currently under consideration and (iii) the building of two-storey houses to replace the existing flats, inlcuding any land, consultant and other significant costs.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. The information is not readily available. I shall reply to the right hon. and learned Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's estimates for *(a)* the number of two-storey houses per acre which will be built on the Divis site if the existing flats were demolished, *(b)* the total number of two-storey homes which could be built on the site and *(c)* the costs of any additional land which might need to be purchased to rehouse any part of the present Divis population which could not be accommodated in two-storey houses built on the existing site.

Mr. Needham: (a) 15; (b) 165; (c) not available.

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what are the current average annual costs for *(a)* maintenance of two-storey dwellings in the state sector in Belfast of the same age as the Divis flats and *(b)* management of the same;

(2) how many residents of the Divis flats have received rent and rate rebates, heating allowances and other forms of benefit support other than housing benefit since 1968; and what are the total amounts paid to Divis residents in each category since 1968, or for the period for which figures are available;

(3) what types of repair and maintenance work have been carried out by *(a)* the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and *(b)* the former Northern Ireland Housing Trust each year since 1968 in the Divis flats, including servicing and other work on lifts, bin chutes and heating systems;

(4) how many repair and maintenance requests, including the self-help scheme, have been made by Divis residents per year since 1968 according to *(a)* total, *(b)* emergency work, *(c)* normal work, A list, and *(d)* planned work, B list;

(5) what are the average annual costs from 1968, for the years for which figures are available, for management of the Divis flats according to *(a)* total, *(b)* emergency work, *(c)* normal work, A list, and *(d)* planned work, B list.

Mr. Needham: The information in the form requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are currently on the waiting list seeking *(a)* transfer into Divis and *(b)* transfer out of Divis; what is the breakdown of each list according to the categories used in housing allocation; and what are the average lengths of time spent on each waiting list according to the categories used in housing allocation.

Mr. Needham:

	Priority Transfer	*Ordinary Transfer*
(a)	—	4
(b)	21	173

The rest of the information in the form requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the figures for the number of dwellings in the Divis complex *(a)* originally, following completion, *(b)* after the demolition of the Whitehall and Farsett blocks, and *(c)* after the projected demolition of two further blocks.

Mr. Needham: *(a)* 795 dwellings; *(b)* 623 dwellings; *(c)* 536 dwellings.

New Dwellings (Building Costs)

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are *(a)* the average costs by type, including architect and other fees, of building new dwellings in Belfast and *(b)* the estimated costs by type, including building costs, fees, interest, maintenance and management charges over a 60-year period of new dwellings in Belfast.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. The information is not readily available. I shall reply to the right hon. and learned Member as soon as possible.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations were received from the Government of the Republic of Ireland during the course of negotiations on the Anglo-Irish agreement as to the role to be played in such negotiations by representatives of the Unionist population.

Mr. King: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Exports

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on what is being done by Her Majesty's Government in Northern Ireland to secure increased export orders.

Dr. Boyson: Export promotion is a major element of the Industrial Development Board's medium-term strategy, and the board offers a wide range of financial and practical assistance to help Northern Ireland companies to identify and exploit opportunities in new and existing export markets.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Tobacco Advertising

Mrs. Roe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the Government's discussions with the tobacco industry about tobacco advertising are yet completed.

Mr. Fowler: The Government have reached a new voluntary agreement with the tobacco industry to govern the advertising and promotion of tobacco products and health warnings. The agreement will come into effect on 1 April and run until 31 October 1989.

The main new provisions are:

First, advertising of cigarettes in cinemas will cease.

Second, in place of the present health warning, there will be six new messages that will be given roughly equal exposure on packs, posters and press advertisement. The wording of the warnings will be:

—Smoking Can Cause Fatal Diseases
—Smoking Can Cause Heart Disease
—Smoking When Pregnant Can Injure Your Baby and Cause Premature Birth
—Stopping Smoking Reduces the Risk of Serious Diseases
—Smoking Can Cause Lung Cancer, Bronchitis and Other Chest Diseases
—More Than 30,000 People Die Each Year in the UK From Lung Cancer.

The new warnings will be ascribed to the Health Departments' Chief Medical Officers.

Third, the space provided for the health warning and tar ratings on posters and press advertisements will be increased from 15 to 17½ per cent. of the available area.

Fourth, the industry will spend £1 million each year for the duration of the agreement on a campaign with the retail trade, supported by media advertising and direct mail, against illegal sale of cigarettes to children under the age of 16.

Fifth, expenditure on poster advertising will be frozen in real terms at 50 per cent. of that in year ending 31 March 1980.

Sixth, new rules will prevent cigarette posters being positioned close to schools.

Seventh, there will be no cigarette brand advertising on logos or "give-aways" to children at events sponsored by tobacco companies, such as roadshows and airshows.

Eighth, no cigarettes yielding 18 mg of tar or more will be advertised.

Ninth, no cigarette advertisements will appear in free-standing magazines with a female readership of over 200,000, where a third or more of those readers are aged between 15 and 24 years.

Tenth, the agreement is to be monitored by a new Government/tobacco industry committee under an independent chairman. The chairman will report annually on the progress of the agreement.

These provisions have been incorporated into the detailed text of an agreement, copies of which are being placed in the Libraries of both Houses and are available to the public. Discussions with the industry about the agreement on sports sponsorship by tobacco companies are in progress, led by my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport. The outcome of those discussions will be announced separately in due course.

This agreement is a considerable advance on the previous one. Not only are the public in general provided with clearer messages about the specific dangers to health from smoking, but steps are to be taken to protect particularly vulnerable groups in the population such as children and young people, especially young women in the early child-bearing years.

We attach great importance to the new health warnings. Research had shown that the old warning—

"Smoking can Seriously Damage Your Health"—

had become too familiar and as a result lost much of its original impact. By replacing it with six tougher messages which include specific reference to the main diseases linked with smoking, such as lung cancer and heart disease, I believe that we shall have done much to see that the unique dangers of smoking remain in the public eye. The health warnings will be given roughly equal exposure over the course of the agreement. They should achieve considerably increased prominence, since the amount of space devoted to the health warning on posters and press advertisements is to be increased from 15 to 17½ per cent. of the available area.

The Government are deeply concerned about the number of young people who continue to be drawn to smoking. I am pleased, therefore, that the agreement contains several new provisions intended to protect the young. In particular all cigarette brand advertising on items intended to be given away or sold to children at events sponsored by tobacco companies like roadshows will cease. New rules have also been drawn up to prevent cigarette advertising near schools and other places of education used by young people. In addition, I greatly welcome the campaign suggested by the industry, and to be organised and financed by it, to encourage tobacco retailers to support the law prohibiting the sale of cigarettes to children. The industry will spend £1 million a year over the course of the agreement on the campaign, which represents a very considerable effort. It will use advertising in the national media and trade press, as well as direct mailing of material for display in shops. The campaign will be far more comprehensive in its coverage of shops selling cigarettes than any previous campaign of this type.

Finally, for the first time we are setting up a mechanism to monitor the new agreement. The committee, which will represent the Departments concerned and the industry, will be under an independent chairman. The committee's task will be to ensure that the terms of the voluntary agreement are properly adhered to, to receive details of complaints about compliance, and to undertake surveys from time to time on the industry's observance of particular aspects of the agreement. The chairman will be required to report annually on the work of the committee. The establishment of this new monitoring machinery should go a long way towards ensuring public confidence in the system of controlling tobacco advertising and promotion by means of voluntary agreements.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of the £1,700,000 made available in 1985 to supplementary benefit claimants for exceptionally severe weather payments was paid to claimants registered at *(a)* his office in Huddersfield and *(b)* his office in the Kirklees area as a whole; and how many claimants in the same area qualified for such benefit.

Mr. Newton: In 1985 Huddersfield local offices paid a total of £7,760 to 902 claimants in respect of extra fuel used during a period of exceptionally severe weather. The area of the Kirklees metropolitan borough council is covered by two local offices, Huddersfield and Dewsbury, which between them paid a total of £13,778 to 1,433 claimants.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was paid out in exceptionally severe weather benefits in Dulwich in 1985; and how many claims were accepted.

Mr. Newton: Information is not available in the form requested. Most of the parliamentary constituency of Dulwich is covered by two local offices, Camberwell

(Blenheim grove) and Peckham (Bournemouth road). For information concerning these two offices, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to her on 28 February at column *721*. A small part of Dulwich is served by the Brixton and Crystal Palace local offices, which between them paid a total of £2,202 to 169 claimants in respect of extra fuel used during the period of exceptionally severe weather last year.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the current systems for making extra heating payments to supplementary pensioners during exceptionally severe weather will continue after April 1988.

Mr. Newton: We shall be considering further the provisions for exceptionally severe weather payments in the light of the experience of the revised system this winter, as well as of previous arrangements. That consideration will also take account of our broad proposals for reform in the longer term of the social security system, which of course entail the ending of the current regulated arrangements for making single payments of supplementary benefit.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the progress which is being made by local offices of his Department in drawing up lists of elderly people considered to be most in need of supplementary benefits payments during the present cold weather period and in case there is a recurrence of conditions qualifying for extra benefit.

Mr. Newton: Pensioners, and younger people, who are receiving supplementary benefit or housing benefit supplement can claim an "exceptionally severe weather payment" if their fuel bill is higher than normal because of the recent spell of cold weather. The availability of such payments, and the criteria governing their award, has been widely publicised—notably in an advertisement placed in the national press on 7 and 9 March. Local social security offices have been asked to give such claims priority.

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration has been given to altering the current system for making extra heating payments to supplementary pensioners during exceptionally severe weather.

Mr. Newton: We shall be considering the provision further in the light of this winter's experience.

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what parts of Lambeth have been declared to be areas experiencing exceptionally severe weather for the purpose of extra payments for heating to recipients of social security supplementary benefit.

Mr. Newton: The whole of Lambeth was covered by a joint declaration by local offices in the Greater London area that the weather had been exceptionally severe last month.

Benefits

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what, for the most recent date for which information is available, were, or were estimated to be *(a)* the number of people in receipt of benefit, *(b)* the number of people in receipt of benefit who were also receiving supplementary benefit, and *(c)* the number of people in receipt of benefit who were also receiving standard housing benefit, in respect of each of the following: (i) retirement pension, (ii) invalidity pension, (iii) widow's pension, (iv) widow's allowance, (v) widowed mother's allowance, (vi) unemployment benefit, (vii) sickness benefit, (viii) maternity allowance, (ix) invalid care allowance, and (x) severe disablement allowance;

(2) what, for the most recent 12-month period for which information is available, was, or was estimated to be *(a)* the benefit expenditure, *(b)* the benefit expenditure, with respect to people who were also receiving supplementary benefit, and *(c)* the benefit expenditure with respect to those people who were also receiving standard housing benefit in relation to each of the following: (i) retirement pension, (ii) invalidity pension, (iii) widow's pension, (iv) widow's allowance, (v) widowed mother's allowance, (vi) unemployment benefit, (vii) sickness benefit, (viii) maternity allowance, (ix) invalid care allowance, and (x) severe disablement allowance.

Mr. Newton: The latest figures for numbers of people in receipts of the benefits listed, together with supplementary benefit and standard housing benefit, are as follows:

(Thousands)

	Number of Beneficiaries	*Number of Beneficiaries with Supplementary Benefit*	*Number of Beneficiaries with Standard Housing Benefit*
Retirement* Pension	9,028	1,822	2,570
Widow's'* Pension	288	27	
Widowed Mother's* Allowance	99	—	200
Widows'* Allowance	30	3	
Sickness† Benefit	338	20	n.a.
Invalidity† Benefit	737	82	n.a.
Non-Contributory†• Invalidity Pension	153	83	n.a.
Housewives Non-Contributory† Invalidity Pension	49		
Maternity‡ Allowance	109	4	n.a.
Unemployment‖ Benefit	905	214	125
Invalid Care¶ Allowance	9	3	n.a.

* 30 September 1983
† 2 April 1983
‡ 31 March 1983
‖ 10 November 1983

¶ 31 December 1983
n.a. = Not available
• Housewives Non-Contributory Invalidity Pension and Non-Contributory Invalidity Pension were replaced by Severe Disablement Allowance in November 1984.

Benefit expenditure is not analysed in the form requested. However, the expenditure for the individual benefits listed was as follows in the financial year 1983-84:

Benefit Expenditure

	£ million
Retirement Pension	14,654
Widows' Benefit (all)	771
Sickness Benefit	265
Invalidity Benefit	1,872
Non-Contributory Invalidity Pension*	182
Maternity Allowance	141
Invalid Care Allowance	10

* including Housewives' NCIP.

For an analysis of the amount of supplementary and housing benefit paid by client group I refer the hon. Member for table 3.15.9 of the public expenditure White Paper, volume II (Cmnd. 9702-II).

Income Support

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) further to his answers of 5 February, *Official Report*, column *190*, and 19 February, *Official Report*, column *205*, if he will provide a breakdown of the figure for the additional expenditure consequent on fixing the income support personal allowance for single people aged 18 to 24 years at £30·60 per week;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 19 February, *Official Report*, column *205*, about income support, if he will publish details of how the total figure of £200 million to £250 million was arrived at.

Mr. Newton: The main element is an estimated increase of some £200 million in income support expenditure resulting from applying the higher benefit rate proposed by the hon. Member to the 573,000 single householders and non-householders aged 18 to 24 currently on benefit, together with an increase of some £3 million through paying the higher benefit rate to dependants aged 18 and over. In addition, it is estimated that housing benefit and family credit expenditure would increase by over £10 million and £2 million respectively (the latter in respect of dependants in family credit families).

Unemployment and Supplementary Benefit

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) on what factors his Department calculates that approximately 16,000 people are affected by the ruling of Mr. Justice Woolf in 1984 concerning illegally deducted unemployment and supplementary benefits from claimants;

(2) what specific steps have been taken by his Department since July 1984 to attempt to trace the names of unemployment and supplementary benefit claimants found by Mr. Justice Woolf to have had their benefits illegally deducted by his Department.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my predecessor's reply to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on 30 March 1984 at columns *350-51* which described the method used for estimating the number of cases (17,000) which were believed to be due for a refund in 1982 but had not been paid. On the basis of that estimate it was assumed that during the 18 months, including the first half of 1983, when corrective action was taken, some 25,500 claimants were underpaid. Dormant files are normally destroyed after 18 months so that records would not have been available for earlier periods. At the time the estimates were made some 9,300 refunds had been made following a search through the live files and a publicity exercise and it was estimated therefore that perhaps 16,000 cases were outstanding. All of the figures are necessarily rough estimates.

No special steps have been taken since July 1984 to identify the remaining cases but staff are under instructions to examine cases where repeat claims for benefit are made in dormant cases and to make refunds where appropriate. This has led to 420 refunds being made since 4 July 1984.

The deductions were not made illegally. Regulations require that a deduction be made if a question of voluntary unemployment arises, but for the amount withheld to be paid to the claimant if the question is decided in his favour. The underpayments in question arose from failure to make these payments at that second stage. Such deductions are made only in supplementary benefit cases.

Single Clothing Payments

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many refugees and asylum seekers have made claims for single clothing payments during the last two years; and what has been the cost for each year.

Mr. Newton: I regret the information requested is not available.

Urgent Needs Payments

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library the following guidance issued to staff in local offices of his Department: *(a)* code AX concerning the recovery of urgent needs payments and *(b)* code LR concerning the recovery of moneys from liable relatives.

Mr. Major: It would not be in the public interest to do so.

Benefits (Young Claimants)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what studies he intends to initiate in the west midlands region to look into the number of young claimants under the age of 26 years who stay on at the same address when their entitlement to board and lodging assistance runs out, the number who stop claiming supplementary benefit and the proportion of these who find work, the number who go back to their parents and the number who go to stay with friends or relatives.

Mr. Newton: As part of their programme of work regional survey staff are looking at new and repeat claims for supplementary benefit from younger boarders in a small number of offices in the west midlands.

Single Payments

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration is given in assessing applications for single payments of supplementary benefit in respect of children who have outgrown rather than worn out footwear and clothing.

Mr. Newton: Regulation 27 of the Supplementary Benefit (Single Payments) Regulations provides that no payment for either clothing or footwear needs can be made where the need has arisen either through normal wear and tear or in the normal course of events; for example, where an item of clothing or footwear is outgrown.

Such claims can be considered only under the provisions of regulation 30 of the regulations where a single payment would be the only means of preventing serious damage or serious risk to the health or safety of a member of the claimant's assessment unit. Guidance on this provision in relation to children's clothing and footwear needs has been issued by the Chief Adjudication Officer at paragraphs 7545-7547 and 7566-7569 of the S manual, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will correlate the numbers of single payment awards made in each Department of Health and Social Security office with the number of claimants in each of those offices; and if he will place the information in the Library.

Mr. Major: The information requested is already available in the Library.

State Pension (Interest Payments)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether Her Majesty's Government have any plans to seek to pay interest to pensioners who receive their state pension in arrears on either a four weekly or quarterly basis for that period between the pension being due and the pension being paid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I have no such plans.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are currently receiving *(a)* supplementary benefit and *(b)* supplementary pensions, in the Norfolk, North constituency area.

Mr. Major: The constitueny of Norfolk, North is covered for social security purposes by three local offices, Norwich (Chantry), Great Yarmouth and Kings Lynn, but their boundaries are not conterminous.

On 11 February 1986 (the latest date for which information is available) there were 27,328 people receiving supplementary allowance and 18,492 receiving supplementary pension from those offices.

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of claimants in receipt of supplementary benefit in the Greater Manchester area, by constituency; of these, how many are pensioners, families with children, and young people under the age of 25 years; and of each of these three categories, what information he has regarding additional requirements which are included in their supplementary benefit assessment, by type and average amount of additional requirements.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Dental Charges

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 17 December 1985, *Official Report*, column *147*, why the detailed calculations underlying the recommendations of the dental rates study group are not published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The dental rates study group agrees each year to make available to individuals or organisations on request information that is submitted to it. It has decided, however, not to make available certain information, including its detailed calculations, when to do so might prejucice its ability to carry out its functions effectively.

Mr. Whitfield asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy that students in full-time education should be exempted from dental charges during temporary employment in vacations.

Mr. Hayhoe: Students under 19 in full-time education are exempt from dental charges. Older students have to pay charges, whether or not they are in temporary employment, though they can obtain help with charges if they have a low income. I have no plans to change these arrangements.

National Insurance Credits

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many unemployed people in Great Britain were claiming national insurance credits but were not receiving either unemployment benefit or supplementary allowance, at November 1985; and how many of these people *(a)* had been unemployed for over one year and exhausted their entitlement to unemployment benefit, *(b)* had claimed unemployment benefit but had their claims disallowed or *(c)* were ineligible for other reasons.

Mr. Major: At May 1985, the most recent date for which figures are available, there were 429,200 unemployed claimants who were in receipt of neither unemployment nor supplementary benefit. 207,800 had exhausted their entitlement to unemployment benefit, and of these 151,600 had been unemployed for over a year during the current spell of unemployment. There were 102,100 people whose claims for unemployment benefit were disallowed of whom 11,000 would not be entitled to national insurance credits because, for example, they left their jobs voluntarily, and 119,300 whose entitlement had not yet been determined or who were serving the three waiting days for unemployment benefit.

Hospital Laboratories (Crown Immunity)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce legislation to remove Crown immunity from hospital laboratories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: No. The Government's decision about the removal of Crown immunity was announced by my right hon. Friend on 6 February at column *211*, and the necessary legislation will be introduced soon. No further legislation is planned.

Junior Hospital Doctors

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each year since 1979 the total number of appointments of junior hospital doctors from the Commonwealth.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. The number of junior doctors in post (not appointments) born outside the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland is given in the table.

Hospital junior doctors born outside the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland in post at 30 September each year England

	All junior doctors
1979	8,461
1980	8,342
1981	8,230
1982	7,950
1983	7,539
1984	7,184
1985	7,059

Orthopaedic Operations

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many appointments for orthopaedic operations have been cancelled in the South East Staffordshire health district due to the shortage of junior hospital doctors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. It is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of South-East Staffordshire health authority.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the longest time a patient now waits for an orthopaedic operation; and what is the average time in the South West Thames regional health authority area.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

NHS (Property Disposal)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide details of the planned disposal over the next two years of residential National Health Service accommodation by district health authority and provide for each health authority *(a)* the number of present houses, flats, single units, *(b)* the number of future houses, flats, single units, *(c)* the present numbers of staff housed, *(d)* the future number of staff to be housed and *(e)* the estimated income from property disposal.

Mr. Hayhoe: I will provide a summary of districts' plans when they have been approved by the Department, which will contain much of the information requested. Authorities have not, however, been asked to provide a breakdown of current and proposed provision between flats, houses and single units.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if it is intended that the claim of speech therapists for equal pay for work of equal value shall be reviewed in time for the 1986 pay round; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: This is a matter for the management side of the Scientific and Professional Staffs Council which is due to meet the staff side representatives of speech therapists today to listen to their amplification of a written proposal about the pay of speech therapists.

Medroxyprogesterone Acetate

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many girls, and of what age, in the care of local authorities are being prescribed medroxyprogesterone acetate; and if he will give data for the previous five years;

(2) what information he has of prescriptions for medroxyprogesterone acetate being made for girls aged under 16 years.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that such information is not collected centrally.

Health Authorities

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many district health authorities serve two or more metropolitan district councils within their geographical area.

Mr. Whitney: One. The metropolitan boroughs of Knowsley and St. Helens both lie within the boundaries of St. Helens and Knowsley district health authority.

Accident and Emergency Departments

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many general hospitals have accident and emergency departments without having the back-up facility of an intensive care unit within the hospital.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks in precisely the form requested. I shall let the hon. Member have the available information concerning all hospitals with accident and emergency departments as soon as possible.

General Hospitals

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the district health authorities which have within their district more than one general hospital.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. General hospitals are not explicitly defined in the statistics collected centrally.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many pensioner households lost all housing benefit as a result of the changes which came into effect in November 1985; and, of these, how many were tenants and how many owner-occupiers.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 March 1986, c. *439*]: It is estimated that about 210,000 fewer pensioner households received housing benefit as a result of the increase in the rate rebate taper above the needs allowance, offset where appropriate by the real improvement in the dependent child addition to the needs allowance in November 1985. About three-quarters of these were owner-occupiers, the remainder tenants.

NHS (Private Contractors)

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will publish the latest information he has about the number of *(a)* laundry, *(b)* domestic and *(c)* cleaning contracts submitted for competitive tender by health authorities, the proportion of each awarded "in-house" and to outside companies and the savings resulting therefrom.

(2) what were the cumulative savings at the end of 1985 made by health authorities as a result of submitting laundry, domestic and cleaning services to competitive tender.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 March 1986, c. *132*]: The estimated savings at 31 December 1985 on 519 tendering excercises reported by health authorities were £41·9 million a year. The details are as follows:

Savings

	£ million
221 domestic awarded in house	15·9
97 domestic awarded to private contractors	16·5
119 catering awarded in house	4·6
7 catering awarded to private contractors	0·6
56 laundry awarded in house	3·2
19 laundry awarded to private contractors	1·1

DHAs (Chairmanships)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which individuals or organisations outside his Department have been consulted or have had sight of the current nominees for district health authority chairmanships; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 March 1986, c. *131*]: The Secretary of State is not required to consult anyone in making these appointments. Account, however, has been taken of nominations and views from various sources including those from hon. Members, National and local organisations and individuals.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Covenanted Donations

38. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest estimate he has of the financial benefit to the arts from covenanted donations.

Mr. Moore: No separate information is available for the arts, but in the year to 30 September 1985 tax repayments to all charities in respect of deeds of covenant totalled £130 million. The arts will also benefit from the proposals my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced in the Budget for further tax relief for charitable giving.

Small Businesses

Mr. Nicholls asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the fiscal measures implemented since 1979 which have been designed to benefit small businesses either directly or indirectly.

Mr. Moore: I have written to my hon. Friend listing these measures and have arranged for a copy of the letter to be placed in the House of Commons Library.

Taxpayers

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many taxpayers fall into the following categories: *(a)* single, *(b)* married couple, husband only working, *(c)* married couple, wife only working, *(d)* married couple, both earning, *(e)* single pensioners and *(f)* married couple pensioners.

Mr. Moore: The latest estimates for 1985-86 are as follows:

	Taxpayers (thousands)
Age under 65	
Single	7,900
Married couple:	
Husband only working	4,200
Wife only working	350
Both working	5,200
Total under 65	17,650
Age 65 or over	
Single	1,350
Married couple*	1,300
Total over 65	2,650
Total	20,300

* Where either spouse is aged 65 or over.

Oil Price (Effects)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the saving to consumers of oil in each of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries as a result of the fall in the price of oil to the present level, expressed at an annual rate; and how much of this saving is at the expense of overseas suppliers.

Mr. MacGregor: In each of the OECD countries savings to consumers of oil from lower crude oil prices will depend on the extent to which companies pass on the lower cost of oil, how Governments react, for example with regard to fuel taxes, and the extent to which oil consumption changes. It would be impracticable to attempt to estimate these effects.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the balance of payments effect on the exchange rate for the pound sterling against the deutschmark, the dollar and the yen of the fall in the price of oil to the current level compared with the averages for 1985, all other things being equal.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The precise relationship between changes in the oil price, the exchange rate, and the balance of payments is complex and any estimate of the effect of recent changes would be highly speculative.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing such information as is available to him on the current account surplus/deficit for the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany and Japan for the latest available period of 12 months covering *(a)* visibles and invisibles, *(b)* visibles and *(c)* trade in manufactures, measured in terms of local currency; and if he will also include his estimate of the balance of payments gain or loss

which would accrue in each case if the price of oil remained at the present level and consumption remained unchanged.

Mr. MacGregor: The following figures are for 1985 except where otherwise indicated:

	Visibles and invisibles	*Visibles*	*Trade in manufactures**
United Kingdom (£ billion)	3·3	−2·3	−2·9
United States of America ($ billion)	−117·7	−124·3	†−56·2
Germany (DM billion	36·3	74·1	†56·0
Japan (Y trillion)	11·8	13·4	†8·4

* SITC categories 5, 6, 7 and 9.

† Figures for twelve months to November 1985.

Sources: OECD Monthly Statistics of Foreign Trade (February 1986); Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics, Department of Trade and Industry (February 1986), national sources for individual countries.

The balance of payments gain or loss from a fall in oil prices depends on how the change in oil price affects other prices, economic activity, exchange rates and so on. There is considerable uncertainty about the magnitude of these effects.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the effect on wholesale and retail prices of the fall in the price of oil to the present level, all other things being equal; what effect the resultant increase in purchasing power is likely to have on the rate of inflation; if he will describe the effect that the increase in purchasing power will have on the rate of growth; and how this differs in its effect from other ways of reflating the economy.

Mr. MacGregor: Estimates of the effects on inflation and purchasing power of the fall in oil prices are inevitably very uncertain. Treasury working paper No. 34 by S. Powell and G. Horton, "The Economic Effects of Lower Oil Prices", published a year ago, gave some estimates. Different results are shown in studies published by independent commentators.

Base Lending Rate

Mr. Maxton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide a table on all movements of the base lending rate of the Bank of England from January 1970 to the present time.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The banking department of the Bank of England has a base rate for lending to its private customers, but this has no significance for monetary policy and is not published.

Page 194 of the 1986 *Economic Trends* annual supplement gives the bank's minimum lending rate to the market, in the form of the bank rate up to 1972 and the minimum lending rate from then up to 1981. Since 1981 a minimum lending rate has not been posted on a continuous basis by the Bank of England.

London clearing banks' short-term money rates from 1971 are shown on page 195 of the *Economic Trends* annual supplement and updated in the monthly *Economic Trends*. Before 1971, the rates of interest charged by London clearing banks were related to the bank rate.

European Monetary System

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what advantages and disadvantages for *(a)* United Kingdom industry and *(b)* the United Kingdom monetary system are being taken into account by the Government in considering whether to join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Government take all relevant factors into account.

Acceptances in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Faulds asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will list, giving the relevant references in the *Official Report*, those occasions on which the amounts of estate duty or capital transfer tax satisfied by the acceptance of objects or land in respect of individual cases have been specified in written answers dealing with such acceptances subsequent to those listed comprehensively in annex 2 to the memorandum by Her Majesty's Treasury dated 31 August 1977, published in the third report from the Expenditure Committee, House of Commons Paper 280 of Session 1977-78, pages 6-12, until those detailed in the written answers to the hon. Member for Warley, East on 1 May 1980, *Official Report*, column 597, listed acceptances during the last financial year prior to the responsibility for such answers being transferred from Her Majesty's Treasury to the Office of Arts and Libraries and the Department of the Environment;

(2) whether he will specify, giving the relevant references in the *Official Report*, the occasions when it has been stated to the House on behalf of Her Majesty's Treasury that the amounts of estate duty or capital transfer tax satisfied by the acceptance of objects or land is confidential in respect of individual cases during the period between the initiation of the system to the transfer of responsibility in 1980.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Customs and Excise (Job Sharing)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why the requests from the Civil and Public Services Association to initiate job-sharing schemes in the Customs and Excise department in Merseyside have been refused.

Mr. Brooke: Requests from the Civil and Public Services Association to initiate job-sharing schemes in the customs and excise department in Merseyside have not been refused. A local circular has been issued inviting applications; a number have been received and these are now under consideration. Centrally, a draft circular has been put to the trade union side with a view to distribution throughout the department in the near future.

Private Schools

Mr. Freud asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the implications of the changes announced in the Budget in respect of charities for private schools with charitable status.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

THE ARTS

Films

30. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Minister for the Arts what support he gives from the arts budget to films and their preservation.

Mr. Luce: In the current year I have allocated some £9·2 million from the arts budget for film purposes, of which some £2·3 million has been allocated for film preservation.

Tyne and Wear

32. **Mr. Beith** asked the Minister for the Arts what assessment he has made of the likely impact on arts expenditure in rural areas in Northumberland of the new arrangements in connection with the replacement of arts funding within Tyne and Wear previously provided by Tyne and Wear county council.

Mr. Luce: A satisfactory settlement has been reached with the successor authorities in Tyne and Wear, and no Arts Council or Regional Arts Association funds will be diverted from rural to urban areas.

Victoria and Albert Museum

33. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Minister for the Arts what information he has about the recent level and trend of attendances at the Victoria and Albert museum.

Mr. Luce: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) on 22 January this year which showed that attendances at the Victoria and Albert museum during 1985 were 0·6 per cent. lower than in the previous year. In the period November 1985 to February 1986, the first four months of the voluntary donations scheme, there were 310,397 recorded visitors to the museum's main collection in South Kensington compared with 499,429 in the same period a year ago.

Works of Art (International Trading)

34. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Minister for the Arts if he has received any representations from the Spanish Government about the forthcoming auction of Goya's Marquesa de Santa Cruz, in the context of the 1984 code of practice for the correct international trading in works of art; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I have received a letter on this subject from the Spanish Government and I am considering it. I cannot, however, comment on this particular case which may be the subject of a future court action. In the matter of the code of practice for the control of international trading in works of art, to which my hon. Friend refers, I naturally attach great importance to the continuing high reputation of the art trade in this country, which is reflected in the existence of this voluntary code of good practice.

Public Libraries and Museums Act 1984

35. **Mr. Freud** asked the Minister for the Arts if he has any plans to change the form of the report laid before Parliament under section 17 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 on the exercise of his functions under the Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The form of my recent report under section 17 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act was similar to that used in recent years. I have no plans for a change.

East Midlands

36. **Mr. Janner** asked the Minister for Arts what representations he has received concerning the provision of funding for the arts in the east midlands.

Mr. Luce: I have had very few representations. The Arts Council will be announcing its allocation to east midlands arts shortly.

Metropolitan Counties (Allocation)

37. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Minister for the Arts if all arts organisations in the metropolitan counties have now been informed of their grant allocations from the Arts Council for the next financial year.

Mr. Luce: It is expected that grants will be announced over the next few weeks, when local commitments have been clarified.

South Bank

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts if South Bank board members are allowed to charge the cost of travelling from abroad to attend board meetings or business; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The question has not arisen.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts (1) what part South Bank board members play in respect of bookings for artists on the South Bank; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what guidelines are given to South Bank board members who may wish to engage artists for paid employment on the South Bank and with whom they have a personal or professional connection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Bookings for artists will continue to be made by the concert halls' planning department which will on 1 April 1986 come under the supervision of the general director (arts).

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts if he will take steps to prevent South Bank board members receiving fees for performances on the South Bank organised or originated by the board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts if, pursuant to his reply of 17 March, *Official Report*, column *87*, he will provide a breakdown of the travel costs paid by the Arts Council for the fact-finding visits to the United States of America, Canada and Australia by Mr. Pulford and Mr. Grierson according to *(a)* journey, *(b)* mode and class of travel and *(c)* a breakdown of subsistence according to (i) hotel costs and (ii) per diem subsistence allowances; and how long the visits lasted.

Mr. Luce: All subsistence paid to Mr. Grierson and Mr. Pulford was at Civil Service per diem rates.

Mr. Grierson's travel as far as Los Angeles, and the greater part of his expenses in North America, were not paid for by the Arts Council. Where Mr. Grierson's fares were charged to the Arts Council, they were charged at club class rates. Mr. Pulford's round-the-world ticket was the standard club-class excursion fare. Mr. Grierson's visit lasted 16 days, and Mr. Pulford's 19 days.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts, pursuant to his reply of 17 March, *Official Report*, column *87*, when he expects the contract of employment between the general director (administration) and the South Bank board to be issued.

Mr. Luce: The contract will be issued shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts, pursuant to his reply of 17 March, *Official Report*, column *88*, which contractors for which services have been accepted by the South Bank board.

Mr. Luce: The information is as follows:

	Contractor
Security contract	Argus Shield
Cleaning contract (internal)	Blue Arrow Company
Cleaning contract (external)	Pall Mall
Maintenance contract	Matthew Hall

Jubilee Gardens

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts what are the intentions of the South Bank board in respect of existing staff in Jubilee Gardens.

Mr. Luce: Some of the duties of these staff will be undertaken by staff appointed by the South Bank Board, and all such appointments will be made under the guidance laid down by the London and Metropolitan Staff Commission.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts what are the terms agreed for a lease between the London Residuary Body and the South Bank board in respect of Jubilee Gardens.

Mr. Luce: The terms of the proposed agency agreement have not yet been agreed.

Arts Council Members (Payments)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts what is the policy in respect of the Arts Council members receiving payments or fees for artistic work commissioned or organised by the Arts Council.

Mr. Luce: The policy is contained in the Arts Council's terms of appointment for advisory panels and committee members, and is as follows:

"Members of the Council's advisory panels, committees and sub-committees are ineligible to receive awards and bursaries direct from the Council even if such awards are recommended by a panel, committee or sub-committee other than the one to which the member belongs. However, members are permitted to accept payments offered by third parties from funds made available by the Council.

From time to time advisers, including panel and committee members, may be asked to carry out specific tasks for the Council which panel and committee members would not be expected to do within the terms of their appointment as advisers or committee members. In such cases fees may be paid as appropriate."

National Heritage Act 1980

Mr. Faulds asked the Minister for the Arts if he has anything to add to his answer of 14 March, in relation to the number of statements laid before Parliament covering the financial years 1980-81 to 1984-85 inclusive in compliance with section 9(6) of the National Heritage Act 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Acceptances in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Faulds asked the Minister for the Arts if he has anything to add to his answer to the hon. Member for Warley, East of 14 March, *Official Report*, columns *609-10* in relation to the number of references in written answers during the financial years 1980-81 to 1984-85 specifying particulars of estate duty or capital transfer tax satisfied in individual cases of acceptances in lieu of such taxes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

ENERGY

Nuclear Reprocessing

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the proposed expansion of nuclear reprocessing at Dounreay complies with articles 37, 40 and 41 of the Euratom treaty.

Mr. Goodlad: The UKAEA and BNFL's application for outline planning consent for the construction of a European fast reactor demonstration reprocessing plant is to be the subject of a public local inquiry starting on 7 April. It is therefore not yet appropriate to provide the relevant information about the project to the Commission under articles 37 and 41 of the Euratom treaty. This will be provided in due course should the project go ahead. Action under article 40 is for the Commission.

Oil Rigs (Visits)

Mr. Eadie asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on how long it takes to arrange offshore visits to oil rigs in the North sea on requests from trade unions and other similar organisations; and if he will make a statement on the right of access by such organisations.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: In all licensing rounds from the fifth onwards, a published criterion taken into account in judging applications has been whether the prospective licensee subscribed to the memorandum on trade union access to offshore installations. The memorandum provides that operators will take appropriate action to ensure trade union officials are granted reasonable access to offshore installations. The timing of such visits is a matter to be resolved between the unions and companies concerned, having regard to operational circumstances. ACAS is available to assist employers and unions faced with any particular difficulties.

Coal

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the countries that are importing coal from Great Britain, giving the annual tonnages over each of the past five years.

Mr. David Hunt: Exports of coal from the United Kingdom have been as follows:

United Kingdom coal exports ('000 tonnes)

Destination	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
EC countries					
Denmark	1,925	2,057	1,571	612	1,278
Irish Republic	491	469	429	309	392
France	2,624	1,911	1,565	778	231
Federal Republic of Germany	1,498	789	624	122	191
Belgium-Luxembourg	347	134	105	74	44
Netherlands	783	502	318	71	14
Greece	—	—	3	25	13
Italy	67	6	6	6	—
Total EC	7,735	5,869	4,620	1,997	2,163
Non-EC countries					
Morocco	—	39	192	87	168
Portugal	34	59	133	5	111
Sweden	218	113	201	34	65
Norway	64	45	68	24	13
Spain	88	54	11	21	3
Finland	1,168	1,102	765	114	2
Switzerland	14	—	169	83	—
Israel	77	94	158	58	—
Other	115	12	21	17	33
Total non-EC	1,778	1,518	1,718	443	394
Grand total	9,513	7,387	6,340	2,440	2,558

Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has made within the councils of the European Economic Community and the European Coal and Steel Community about the dumping of third country coal into western Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: None. The European Communities apply the GATT anti-dumping and subsidy codes which cover dumped and subsidised imports; responsibility to implement those codes rests with the European Commission, to whom any well-founded allegations would be made.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Energy what have been the contracts established between the Central Electricity Generating Board and the National Coal Board and the tonnages of coal sold to the Central Electricity Generating Board by the National Coal Board in each of the last five years.

Mr. Goodlad: Details of the commercial arrangements between the Central Electricity Generating Board and the National Coal Board on coal supply are a matter for the two boards. According to the CEGB's annual reports and accounts, in the last five years the NCB has delivered the following tonnages to it:

	Million tonnes
1980-81	75
1981-82	74
1982-83	79
1983-84	70
1984-85	29

Electricity Supply

Mr. Litherland asked the Secretary of State for Energy what contingency plans exist to ensure the generation and distribution of electrical energy in the event of a major dispute in the electricity supply industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The electricity supply industry has contingency plans to deal with the possible effects of any major dispute in the industry. It would not be appropriate for me to give details of such plans.

Sellafield

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy why the insurance cover for the Sellafield reprocessing plant is due to be shifted from the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to the commercial market as from 1 April.

Mr. Goodlad: Because of the establishment of the trading fund arrangements for the Atomic Energy Authority.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether the Sellafield reprocessing plant is due to be insured against, among other things, earthquakes as from 1 April.

Mr. Goodlad: Sellafield reprocessing plant has always been insured against earthquakes, and this continues under the new commercial arrangements.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether the underwriters from commercial insurance houses who will take on the insurance for the Sellafield reprocessing plant as from 1 April have been excluded from the meetings where the risks of accidents at Sellafield are assessed and safety measures discussed.

Mr. Goodlad: I am advised by British Nuclear Fuels that the underwriters have met it to discuss risks and safety in relation to insurance, and that BNF has fully met each and every request by the underwriters for information.

Low-income Households

Mr. Rost asked the Secretary of State for Energy how his Department values the creation of extra warmth in the homes of low-income households for the purpose of cost-benefit analysis of different heating systems and insulation standards.

Mr. David Hunt: The objective of the Government's energy efficiency campaign is to tackle barriers impeding the take-up of cost-effective energy efficiency measures. It is entirely up to the householder whether to take the benefit of those measures in the form of extra warmth rather than lower bills. My Department has, however, provided practical support for low-income households through its assistance to the voluntary sector insulation projects which have insulated over 130,000 households since my right hon. Friend launched the energy efficiency initiative in 1983.

Mr. Rost asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will define his Department's responsibility with regard to the efficient use of energy in the existing heating systems in low-income households.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department's energy efficiency campaign informs all consumers of the benefits of efficient heating systems and controls, which include lower heating bills and greater warmth. It has also supported the voluntary sector insulation projects which provide practical assistance to low-income households and which have expanded sixfold since my right hon. Friend launched the energy efficiency campaign.

Hot Dry Rocks

Mr. Penhaligon asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish the report prepared for his Department on the economics of energy extraction from hot dry rocks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The report on the economics of energy extraction from hot rocks is in draft and is being discussed with those involved with the hot rock project. I expect to publish the report when it is available as is the normal custom for the renewable energy programme.

St. Fergus Terminal

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Energy if it is the policy of his Department to ensure that local contractors and operators are employed on any contracts at the St. Fergus gas and oil terminal which are being paid for by Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many firms operating in the Banff and Buchan constituency have been invited to tender for the special contract under the management of British Gas at the St. Fergus gas and oil terminal which is being paid for by Her Majesty's Government;

(3) if he will have discussions with the chairman of British Gas on the methods used to prepare a tender list for the special project at the oil and gas terminal at St. Fergus which is being paid for by Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what steps are being taken to ensure that once the special contract at the St. Fergus gas and oil terminal is awarded by British Gas as managing agent for his Department, locally based persons will be given priority in obtaining employment;

(5) if he has issued any instructions to British Gas as managing agent for a proposed contract at the St. Fergus gas and oil terminal regarding an approved list of contractors who will be invited to tender for the work which is being paid for by Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: My Department is negotiating a contract of the kind described with British Gas, and is being consulted by the corporation on the selection of tenderers for the main construction contract. My Department's approach to the selection process is consistent with general Government purchasing policy. I understand that the corporation employs local suppliers for its own projects wherever possible, subject to their technical and financial standing and their competitiveness, and that it intends to apply that policy in this case.

DEFENCE

Visiting Military Aircraft

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by country and type the number of visiting aircraft to the Royal Air Force base on Ascension Island in the last five years.

Mr. Stanley: This information is not held by the Ministry of Defence as Wideawake airfield on Ascension Island is operated by the United States Air Force.

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list by country and type the number of visiting aircraft to the Royal Air Force base in Cyprus in the last five years;

(2) if he will list by country and type the number of visiting aircraft to the Royal Air Force base in West Germany in the last five years;

(3) if he will list by country and type the number of visiting aircraft to the Royal Air Force base in Gibraltar in the last five years;

(4) if he will list by country and type the number of visiting aircraft to the Royal Air Force base in Belize in the last five years.

Mr. Stanley: Information on some operational movements of military aircraft is classified. As far as non-classified movements are concerned, the information requested could only be provided at disproportionate cost in each case.

Military Bands

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total cost of the military bands of each branch of the armed services during the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: The estimated cost of the service bands in the current financial year (1985-86) is as follows:

	£ million
Royal Marines	9·79
Army	28·28
Royal Air Force	4·05

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, in the light of his recent meeting with representatives of interested organisations and companies, he will make a further statement on the extent to which United Kingdom companies awarded strategic defence initiative contracts will be subject to United States export controls on technology in the exploitation of the knowledge they have acquired under such contracts.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have nothing to add to what my right hon. Friend, the then Secretary of State for Defence told the House on 9 December 1985, at column 623.

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, in the light of his recent meeting with representatives of interested organisations and companies, he will make a further statement on the ownership of the industrial property rights arising from strategic defence initiative contracts awarded to United Kingdom companies.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have nothing to add to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) on 11 March 1986, at column 423.

Tanks

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn of 12 February, *Official Report*, column 101, what percentage of the total number of tanks is presently used for training.

Mr. Lee: All tanks in units are used regularly for training in peacetime; the tanks currently allocated to the various training organisations represent some 18 per cent. of the operational tank fleet.

Home Base Defence

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made in the light of Exercise Brave Defender of the adequacy of the United Kingdom's armed reserves for the defence of the home base; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The success of Exercise Brave Defender has confirmed our ability to discharge successfully our crucial military home defence role. The continuing build-up in the strength and capabilities of the reserve forces, as set out in paragraphs 446-451 of last year's "Statement on the Defence Estimates" (Cmnd. 9430-1), is a clear indication of the importance which we place on home defence and of the vital contribution made by our reserve forces.

Airbus Frame

Mr. Normanton asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will institute a study into whether the Airbus airframe might be suitable as part of an advanced airborne early-warning and communications system.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No. We are, however, evaluating airborne early warning systems which could meet the needs of the Royal Air Force. If we were offered a system which used the A300 Airbus as the air vehicle it would be assessed along with other options.

FV438 (Anti-tank Weapons)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn of 12 February, *Official Report*, column *184*, if any replacement is to be provided for the long-range anti-tank weapons, currently mounted on the FV438 vehicle, which are to be withdrawn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lamont: There will be no immediate replacement for the Swingfire missile mounted on the FV438 vehicle. We shall have the option of replacing it with the long range TRIGAT missile when it becomes available in the mid-1990s, but it is too early to say what the precise deployment of LR TRIGAT will be.

Royal Navy Target-Towing Contract

Mr. Churchill asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what advice his Department received from the Civil Aviation Authority about the extent to which the passenger and cargo section of the tender document issued in respect of the Royal Navy's target-towing contract would require a public transport operation, within the terms of the air navigation orders; and what is his policy towards the letting of such long-term contracts on the basis of foreign-registered aircraft;

(2) if, before letting the Royal Navy target-towing contract, he will take steps to satisfy himself that the chosen contractor meets all Civil Aviation Authority requirements and that in the light of the proposed amendments to the air navigation orders prohibiting the use of foreign-registered aircraft for such United Kingdom-based contracts, there will be no cost to the taxpayer in subsequently transferring to the United Kingdom register any foreign-registered aircraft which may be involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: My noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence Support will write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 25 March 1986

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Uranium Ore Imports

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the total amount of uranium ore concentrates imported into Britain during 1985, including all material imported for processing for eventual export to foreign customers; and how much came into Britain from *(a)* Canada, *(b)* Australia, *(c)* the United States of America, *(d)* South Africa and *(e)* Namibia, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is not available.

Competition Policy

Mr. Fletcher asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, in view of the decision not to refer the second Guinness bid for Distillers to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and the opportunity this opens for bidding companies to negotiate with the Office of Fair Trading the divestment of parts of its business or make other arrangements to avoid a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, he will make a statement about the implications of this decision on competition policy and the future conduct of the competition authorities in dealing with mergers.

Mr. Howard: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Import Substitution

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he takes to promote import substitution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply,* 24 March 1986]: I and my colleagues encourage all buyers — companies, individual consumers and the public sector —to look carefully at the advantages of buying British goods which are well designed, well-made and competitively priced. Much of my Department's work helps British manufacturers meet these requirements. In addition, we are looking at what further steps can be taken in this field.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

A-level Grading System

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will announce his decision on the Secondary Examination's Council's recommendations for reform of the A-level grading system.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have written today to Sir Wilfred Cockcroft, the chairman of the Secondary Examinations Council, informing him that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have considered the SEC's recommendations, together with the responses to a further round of consultations which we undertook in the autumn, and that we have decided that, with effect from the summer 1987 A-level examinations, the following A-level grading system should be adopted:

Nomenclature

(i) the 5 A-level pass grades A to E should be retained;

(ii) the present O-grade should be replaced with grade N, denoting a narrow failure, which should be certificated and defined on those certificates;

(iii) an unclassified performance should be identified by the letter U but not certificated.

Grading standards

(i) the A/B grade borderline should be established on the basis of boards' existing practice, including examiners' judgments of quality;

(ii) the B/C and E/N grade borderlines should be established by reference to examiners' judgments of quality and using methods to ensure fairness and reliability at these crucial points;

(iii) the mark range within the B/C and E/N grade borderlines should be divided into three equal intervals and these assigned respectively to grades C, D and E, with the same interval also assigned to grade N.

We consider that these revisions will resolve the long-standing problem of the narrow mark range of grade C. The new system should be both fair and practicable and should stand the test of some years.

We have taken the decision now so that the GCE boards and the HE institutions will have ample time to adjust their procedures for the summer 1987 examinations and autumn 1987 HE admissions respectively. We will be considering with SEC how those who use certificates can best be informed of the nature and significance of these changes.

My right hon. Friend and I are grateful for the SEC's work on this complex problem and for the views of those who were consulted.

Schools (Lunchtime Supervision)

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those education authorities which have not yet submitted acceptable schemes for lunchtime supervision.

Mr. Dunn: Forty-four local education authorities have yet to submit a scheme for lunchtime supervision. Of these, several have indicated informally that they expect to do so but have not as yet been able to finalise their schemes. Authorities wishing to submit proposals in respect of financial year 1986-87 have until 15 April 1986 to do so.

Following is a list of authorities in England which have not yet submitted bids for either 1985-86 or 1986-87.

Barnet
Brent
Haringey
Hounslow
Merton
Richmond-upon-Thames
Sutton
Waltham Forest
Coventry
Dudley
Sandwell
Walsall
Wolverhampton
Knowsley
St. Helens
Sefton
Wirral
Manchester
Rochdale
Salford

Stockport
Tameside
Trafford
Wigan
Barnsley
Rotherham
Calderdale
Kirklees
Leeds
Wakefield
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
North Tyneside
Avon
Cambridgeshire
Cheshire
Cumbria
Dorset
Hertfordshire
Humberside
Lancashire
Leicestershire
Warwickshire
West Sussex
Isles of Scilly

Scientific Research

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what effect he expects the tax proposals in the current Budget to have on the flow of private funds into scientific research in universities and elsewhere; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend and I welcome the Budget proposals designed to encourage charitable giving by companies and individuals. We expect the flow of private funds to universities and other bodies for scientific research and other purposes to increase as a result of them and we hope that all concerned will take full advantage of the opportunities they offer.

Educational Advisers

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of advisers on special educational provision for each local authority, and for England as a whole, in the last year for which data are available.

Mr. Dunn: The Department does collect this information.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much public expenditure has been devoted to education in each of the last five years *(a)* by way of teachers' pay, *(b)* by way of capital expenditure, and *(c)* by way of text books.

Sir Keith Joseph: Local education authorities in England have spent the following total amounts in respect of the maintained sector of education.

	Teachers' salaries £ million (cash)	*Capital expenditure £ million (cash)*	*Text and library books £ million (cash)*
1980-81	4,830	472	70
1981-82	5,379	362	76
1982-83	5,720	413	86
1983-84	5,998	424	86
1984-85*	6,256	390	86

* Provisional.

School Building

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many new schools have been built since 1979.

Mr. Dunn: Information in the form requested is not held centrally. However, since the start of the 1979-80 financial year approval has been given to 463 major building projects for the provision of new or replacement maintained schools.

Council for National Academic Awards

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the discussions which have been taking place between officials of his Department and representatives of the Council for National Academic Awards about establishing targets for reducing the latter's staff of 160 and annual expenditure of £5 million.

Mr. Walden: Only informal discussions have so far taken place. The matter is now being pursued more formally in the light of the Government's response to the Lindop report announced by my right hon. Friend on 17 March, at columns 1 and 2, which envisages a significant devolution of the council's responsibilities to institutions.

Modern Languages

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he now expects the national policy for the teaching of modern languages, referred to in "Better Schools" to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: A statement of policy on foreign languages in the school curriculum is to be the next in a series of statements of broadly agreed objectives for different subjects taught in schools: our intention is to issue it in draft in the near future.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Kennedy asked the Paymaster General when he expects to receive and publish the next labour force survey.

Mr. Lang: The preliminary results from the 1985 labour force survey are currently being prepared by our officials. It is a little premature to fix a firm publication date, but we intend to publish the information as soon as possible.

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General how many people in Great Britain who were registered as unemployed on 6 February had never had a job since leaving school; and how many of them were aged under 19 years.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. On 6 February 1986 there were 298,480 unemployed claimants in Great Britain who had never had a job since leaving school, of whom 150,432 were aged under 19 years.

Retail Food Industry

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General (1) how many workers were made redundant in the retail food industry in 1983, 1984 and 1985;

(2) how many workers have been made redundant in the retail food industry in *(a)* the south-east, *(b)* the south-west, *(c)* the east midlands, *(d)* the west midlands, *(e)* the north-east and *(f)* the north-west in the last 12 months.

Mr. Lang: The information is not available. The confirmed redundancies statistics do not separately identify industry groups within the retail distribution sector.

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General how many workers are employed in the retail food industry at the latest available date.

Mr. Lang: In December 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 634,000 employees in employment in the retail distribution of food in Great Britain.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General how many young people have now completed a YTS and gone into full-time employment aided by the young workers scheme; and what proportion of them are aged under 18 years.

Mr. Lang: Information is not held in the form requested. It is estimated that over 170,000 young people joining the young workers scheme since January 1982 will have had previous experience of YTS or the youth opportunities programme. All employees under the young workers scheme must be under 18 when first employed by the employer making the application.

Local Enterprise Week

Mr. Cash asked the Paymaster General whether he proposes to hold a Local Enterprise Week during 1986.

Mr. Trippier: The Local Enterprise Weeks held in 1984 and 1985 proved highly successful in spreading the "Enterprise" message. As 1986 has been designated Industry Year, during which many events will be taking place to drive home the Industry Year theme, the opportunity presents itself to put over our own "Enterprise" message in a different but equally effective way. As a result of our encouragement, Ambassador Rail Exhibitions Ltd. is running an Enterprise Express to mark Industry Year. The train will constitute a mobile exhibition on the theme of "Enterprise" and will bring together my Department's small firms service together with exhibitors from the Department of Trade and Industry, the Manpower Services Commission, Business in the Community, British Steel Industries Ltd., NCB (Enterprise) Ltd., the Natural Environmental Research Council and BBC Radio 4. I am to launch the train at Euston station on Monday 14 April, following which the train will tour the country for two weeks to carry the message of "Enterprise" to as many people as possible. A number of ministerial colleagues hope to visit the train at some of its stops.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

EC (Parliamentary Sessions and Members' Salaries)

Mr. Deakins asked the Lord Privy Seal what information he has as to the average length of a parliamentary Session in each of the EEC states; and what is the annual salary of the respective Members of Parliament expressed in terms of an amount for each week in the Session.

Mr. Biffen: The table gives the average length of Session over the last five years for a number of European Parliaments. The figures have been compiled by the IPU. In comparing the figures it is important to note that different countries have different systems of Government which place varying emphasis on the role of their Parliament. Furthermore, the activity of a Parliament is not necessarily reflected by the number of days on which it meets, as it may conduct its activities through Committees. It is also important to note that these figures do not give any reflection of the length of the daily sittings.

	Average length
Austria	
Federal Council	13
National Council	40
Belgium	
Senate	62
Chamber of Representatives	70
Cyprus	40
Czechoslovakia	123
Denmark	106
France	
Senate	121
National Assembly	149
Hungary	12
Netherlands	
1st Chamber	40
2nd Chamber	100
United Kingdom	
Lords	147
Commons	170

The latest available figures on parliamentary salaries which have been compiled on a comparable basis are given in the 20th report of the Review Body on Top Salaries (May 1983). I refer the hon. Gentleman to table 3 in section 5A of volume 2 of that report.

PRIME MINISTER

Women's Rights

Mr. Skinner asked the Prime Minister whether she will now consider establishing a Ministry for women's rights; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

European Council

Q18. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Prime Minister if she will propose at the next meeting of the European Council that the Council should meet monthly; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. As I told the House on 5 December, the Government believe that two European Councils a year are sufficient.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Q49. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister what discussions she has had with President Reagan about the visit of Mr. Clarence Robinson in relation to strategic defence initiative research; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: None.

Research

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Prime Minister how much was spent by each Government Department in each of the last two years on *(a)* internal research and *(b)* external research, including the research councils; and what proportion each figure represents of the total spending of each Department.

The Prime Minister: The information requested is set out in the two tables:

Table 1

Gross expenditure on R & D by Departments 1983-84

£ million

Department	*(1) Intramural expenditure*	*(2) Extramural expenditure*	*(3) Of which research councils*	*(4) Total central Government spending by Department*	*(5) 1 as a percentage of 4*	*(6) 2 as a percentage of 4*	*(7) 3 as a percentage of 4*
MAFF	61·8	61·4	53·5	587·0	10·5	10·5	9·1
DES	0·2	11·4	—	2,173·3	0·0	0·5	—
DEn	2·1	32·1	2·1	505·4	0·4	6·4	0·4
DOE	14·0	20·8	5·0	293·5	4·8	7·0	1·7
ODA	5·0	16·5	0·9	1,110·9	0·5	1·5	0·1
DHSS	15·0	14·9	0·2	45,138·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
HSC	5·0	3·7	0·7	86·0	5·8	4·3	0·8
Home Office	7·5	4·7	—	717·8	1·0	0·7	—
DTI	37·7	335·6	0·3	1,296·5	2·9	25·9	0·0
DTp	15·0	14·7	1·3	1,027·8	1·5	1·4	0·1
NI Departments	8·6	6·1	—	2,858·1	0·3	0·2	—
Scottish Departments	11·2	37·9	0·1	2,671·7	0·4	1·4	0·0
Other Departments	19·9	13·8	0·1	11,161·6	0·2	0·1	0·0
MOD	656·7	1,400·2	0·1	15,465·7	4·2	9·1	0·0
Total	1,222·8	2,005·4	64·5	85,093·3	1·4	2·4	0·1

Notes:

(i) The DES also supports expenditure on R and D by the research councils and other bodies through the science budget. The Research Council element of the science budget amounted to £499 millions in 1983-84.

(ii) Additionally the DES funds research activity in the universities from the block grants of the UGC. It is estimated that this amounted to £511 million in 1983-84.

(iii) The UKAEA intramural and extramural expenditure amounted to £363·1 million and £31·6 million, of which approximately half was funded by the Department of Energy.

(iv) Data on Government funded R and D are contained in the "Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development", published by the Cabinet Office.

Table 2

Gross expenditure on R & D by Department 1984-85

£ million

Department	*(1) Intramural expenditure*	*(2) Extramural expenditure*	*(3) Of which research councils*	*(4) Total central Government spending by Department*	*(5) 1 as a percentage of 4*	*(6) 2 as a percentage of 4*	*(7) 3 as a percentage of 4*
MAFF	67·9	63·4	54·8	601·6	11·3	10·5	9·1
DES	0·2	13·0	—	2,259·2	0·0	0·6	—
DEn	2·1	34·0	1·9	514·1	0·4	6·6	0·4
DOE	14·8	25·6	6·3	335·2	4·4	7·6	1·9
ODA	5·6	17·8	1·1	1,175·3	0·5	1·5	0·1
DHSS	14·5	15·4	0·3	48,659·5	0·0	0·0	0·0
HSC	4·7	3·9	0·7	90·0	5·2	4·3	0·8
Home Office	8·0	5·3	—	792·1	1·0	0·7	—
DTI	33·3	404·6	1·7	1,248·4	2·7	32·4	0·1
DTp	17·5	19·5	1·5	1,133·9	1·5	1·7	0·1
NI Departments	9·0	6·2	—	3,035·3	0·3	0·2	—

Department	(1) Intramural expenditure	(2) Extramural expenditure	(3) Of which research councils	(4) Total central Government spending by Department	(5) 1 as a percentage of 4	(6) 2 as a percentage of 4	(7) 3 as a percentage of 4
Scottish Departments	11·5	40·9	0·1	2,906·6	0·4	1·4	0·0
Other Departments	20·1	17·2	0·1	12,161·5	0·2	0·1	0·0
MOD	688·5	1,563·9	0·1	17,097·7	4·0	9·1	0·0
Total	1,258·6	2,249·6	68·7	92,010·4	1·4	2·4	0·1

Notes:

(i) The DES also supports expenditure on R and D by the research councils and other bodies through the science budget. The Research Council element of the science budget amounted to £530 millions in 1984-85.

(ii) Additionally, the DES funds research activity in the universities from the block grants of the UGC. It is estimated that this amounted to £566 millions in 1984-85.

(iii) The UKAEA intramural and extramural expenditure amounted to £360·9 million and £18·9 million, of which approximately half was funded by the Department of Energy.

(iv) Data on Government funded R and D are contained in the "Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development", published by the Cabinet Office.

Seabirds (South Shields)

Dr. David Clark asked the Prime Minister if, in the light of the refusal of the wildlife incident unit to perform autopsies on seabirds found dead for no apparent reason on the beaches of South Shields recently, she will make a statement on the respective responsibilities of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of the Environment in providing this service.

The Prime Minister: Under the wildlife incident investigation scheme the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is responsible for investigating reports of casualties involving wildlife, bees and in some cases domestic animals alleged to involve agricultural chemicals. The Department of the Environment has no formal responsibilities under this scheme, but the two Departments are in touch in appropriate circumstances. Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food officials have undertaken autopsies on a number of seabirds found dead at South Shields, but these examinations have not identified any unnatural cause of death.

Inner City Initiative (Manchester)

Mr. Kaufman asked the Prime Minister which Minister is responsible for leading the inner city initiative task force for Manchester, Moss Side.

The Prime Minister: The Manchester Moss Side task force is part of the Government's inner cities initiative, for which my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has overall responsibility. The day-to-day management of the initiative is the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General and Minister for Employment.

Council of Europe

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Prime Minister if she will announce the composition of the United Kingdom delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The Prime Minister: I have appointed 18 delegates from the Parliament of the United Kingdom. The delegation this year will consist of 12 members of the Conservative party, five members of the Labour party and one member of the Liberal party. I have also appointed a number of substitute delegates.

The appointments of representatives and substitutes have been made on the basis of nominations by the leaders of those parties concerned.

The same delegation will be representing the United Kingdom Parliament at the Assembly of Western European Union.

Representatives from the Government Benches will be:
The right hon. Member for Torbay (Sir F. Bennett), who will act as leader.
The hon. Members for:
Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg).
Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant).
Norfolk, South-West (Sir P. Hawkins).
Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill).
Twickenham (Mr. Jessel).
Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight).
Sheffield, Hallam (Sir J. Osborn).
Harrow, West (Sir J. Page).
Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith).
Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) and the Earl of Kinnoull.

Representatives from the Labour party will be:
The hon. Members for:
Neath (Mr. Coleman).
Wallsend (Mr. Garrett).
Wentworth (Mr. Hardy).
East Kilbride (Dr. Miller) and the Lord Hughes.

The representative from the Liberal party will be:
The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston).

The following substitutes have been appointed to act as necessary on behalf of the delegates:
From the Government Benches—The right hon. and learned Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) and the hon. Members for:
Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie).
Northampton, South (Mr. Morris).
Welwyn-Hatfield (Mr. Murphy).
Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes).
Cardiff, West (Mr. Terlezki).
Poole (Mr. Ward).
the Lord Newall and the Lord Rodney.

From the Labour party—the right hon. Members for:
Brent, East (Mr. Freeson).
Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan).
The hon. Members for:
Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown).
Tooting (Mr. Cox).
Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Edwards).
Makerfield (Mr. McGuire).
Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry).
Hemsworth (Mr. Woodall).

From the Liberal party—the hon. Member for:
Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross).

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 March.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 March.

Mr. Leigh asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty The Queen.

ENERGY

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest estimate of the range of costs involved in the EDRP facility proposed for Dounreay, for the cost of associated waste management facilities and for the cost of railheads serving the site and the port of entry.

Mr. Goodlad: BNFL and the UKAEA advise an indicative cost for the European fast reactor demonstration reprocessing plant of around £300 million, about one-quarter of this being for radioactive waste management facilities. This estimate is based on preliminary design work. Should the project so ahead, it may need to be refined in discussion with the licensing and authorising departments and the partners in the European collaboration.

Cost of the transport infrastructure would depend on the routes selected; no decision has yet been taken.

Departmental Suppliers

Mr. Ottaway asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the average time it takes his Department to pay suppliers of goods and services to his Department.

Mr. Peter Walker: Most of my Department's suppliers of day-to-day requirements seek payment in 30 days net. Subject to confirmation that the goods and services received and the payments sought are in accordance with contract, payments are generally authorised and made within that time scale.

My Department also places a variety of contracts to meet more specialised requirements, for example in the case of research and development projects, for which suitably commercial payment terms are negotiated individually.

Miners (Reinstatement)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has held any discussions with the chairman of the National Coal Board about the reinstatement of miners who were dismissed in North Staffordshire during the national coal strike.

Mr. David Hunt: The dismissal and re-employment of its employees are matters for the National Coal Board.

Onshore Exploration

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has completed his consideration of the applications for onshore exploration licences.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I have today announced the conditional award of 74 new-style exploration licences for blocks in England, Scotland and Wales. The new style exploration licence allows companies to search and drill for petroleum. However, these rights are not automatic; operator's plans are subject to planning controls and my consent is needed to drill any well. That consent will not be given unless planning permission has been obtained and I am satisfied about the detailed engineering of the well.

Details of the awards, which include the interim awards announced on 12 December 1985, have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Industries

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has reached any conclusions on the future of prison industries.

Mr. Hurd: My predecessor announced on 12 July 1985 that he had asked the Prisons Board to examine how the present network of industrial workshops in England and Wales could be rationalised, while retaining the existing level of work and related activity for inmates.

The number of industrial hours worked in prisons has fallen by more than 50 per cent. since the early '70s and one in three workshop places for inmates is now unfilled. Over the last two years steps have been taken to improve the control, management and policies of prison industries, to find new outlets for their products and to develop existing markets, especially within prison department itself. Despite these and other measures which are being taken to improve performance, I have accepted the Prisons Board's conclusion that prison industries in their present form do not provide value for money and that part of the considerable resources devoted to them could be deployed to better effect.

I have therefore also accepted the board's recommendation that some 600 inmates now employed in 29 workshops for an average of 13 hours a week should be re-allocated to other workshops, to other forms of employment within prisons or to educational or other training courses. When firm alternative plans for worthwhile activity for these inmates have been drawn up, those workshops will close. A further 25 workshops which have not been open for a number of months will also close, and there will be a reduction in instructor posts in 14 others. A further 31 workshops which have been subject to review will remain open provided that a current or promised improved performance can be sustained. It is expected at this stage that nearly all of the 81 staff in post affected by the changes will be offered alternative posts. Staff and their trade unions have been consulted widely during the process of the review, and there will be further consultations during implementation.

Prison industries have a good deal of unrealised potential and will continue to play an important part in prison regimes. The object of this review has been to enhance their role for the future. The reduction in underused capacity will provide them with a firmer base

from which they can deliver a more efficient service and better value for money. The Prisons Board will shortly be setting firm financial and other management targets for prison industries. It is also essential that they should be managed with the right blend of commercial skills and business acumen. There are now a number of senior staff in key positions who can draw on previous commercial experience. In addition, the Board of Management for Prison Service Industries and Farms includes two non-executive members appointed to bring business skills to the management of this part of the prison service. I am asking the non-executive members to give me their recommendations for the further development of the best business practice within prison industries by the end of the year.

I am placing in the Library a summary of the Prisons Board recommendations for rationalisation.

Women (Church of England)

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to "What Women are Doing in the Church of England" to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Mellor: I understand that arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 5 May to 9 May 1986.

Immigration

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passengers refused leave to enter the United Kingdom in 1985 were granted temporary admission.

Mr. Waddington: About 8,500 passengers are estimated to have been granted temporary admission to the United Kingdom in 1985 following an initial refusal of leave to enter.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers and immigration officers and of what rank were involved in the operation at Liberty's department store on 30 January; how many people, and of what nationalities, were *(a)* interviewed and *(b)* detained in the operation, for how long and where; what was the immigration status of the 10 people who were arrested and not charged; for how long they were under arrest; and how many people were charged with theft as a result of the police investigations.

Mr. Waddington: The numbers and ranks of police and immigration officers who visited Liberty's on 30 January 1986 were:

Police
1 Sergeant
3 Constables
5 further constables deployed for security purposes outside the Store.

Immigration Service
1 Chief Immigration Officer
1 Immigration Officer
3 further Immigration Officers subsequently used to pursue enquiries in relation to those arrested.

A total of 19 people (6 Ghanaians, 6 Nigerians, 5 Moroccans, 1 Gambian and 1 Ugandan) were interviewed. They were all arrested.

The immigration status of those not found to be in breach of the immigration laws was as follows: 4 were found to be settled in the United Kingdom; 2 had limited leave to enter or remain; 3 had applications for extension of leave pending; and 1 had formerly enjoyed exemption from control as a result of diplomatic status and now required leave to remain.

The periods spent in custody at West End central police station were:

Less than 6 hours: 5
Over 6 but under 8 hours: 3
Over 8 but under 11 hours: 2

Nobody was charged with theft as a result of the investigation at Liberty's on 30 January 1986, but one person had been so charged as a result of a separate but related inquiry the previous week.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the nature of the investigation on 14 March at British Telecom plc, 81 Newgate street, London EC1; how many police officers and immigration officers and of what rank, were involved; how many people and of what nationalities were *(a)* interviewed and *(b)* detained in the operation, for how long and where; and with regard to what alleged breaches of immigration control these people were interviewed or charged.

Mr. Waddington: This was a major joint operation specifically planned to investigate suspected offences under the immigration laws. The numbers and ranks of police and immigration officers who visited the British Telecom plc building were:

Police
1 Superintendent
1 Inspector
1 Sergeant
19 Constables

Immigration Service
1 Deputy Chief Inspector
1 Inspector
2 Chief Immigration Officers
10 Immigration Officers
1 further Chief Immigration Officer and
5 further Immigration Officers subsequently used to pursue enquiries in relation to those arrested.

A total of 24 people were interviewed. Nineteen people were arrested with the following results:

Nine were judged to be illegal entrants (3 Ghanaians, 3 Portuguese, 2 Nigerians and 1 Colombian); one (a Ghanaian) was charged as an overstayer; seven were charged with working in breach of conditions (5 Nigerians, 1 Ghanaian and 1 Portuguese); and 2 (both Ghanaians) were formally cautioned for working in breach of conditions. Of the other five who were not arrested, one, a Nigerian, was an overstayer who was served with a notice of intention that he should be deported and with a restriction order; and 4 (2 Ghananians and 2 Nigerians) were found not to be in breach of the immigration laws.

Five of the illegal entrants detected at the British Telecom plc building were taken initially to Wood street police station but were subsequently transferred to Latchmere House remand centre, where they are still detained, pending removal from the United Kingdom. In the other cases the periods spent in custody, in Wood street police station, were:

4 hours or less	4
Over 4 but under 6 hours	5
Over 6 but under 9 hours	2
Over 9 but under 14 hours	3

This operation was conducted in accordance with the recommendations of Home Office circular 131-1980, of which a copy was placed in the Library in December 1980.

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the offences and, where relevant, the Acts, under which north Staffordshire miners were charged following the national coal dispute.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Information in the form requested is not available. In Staffordshire as a whole 280 people were charged with a total of 401 offences during and in connection with the NUM dispute. Two hundred and seventy-two of those charged gave their occupation as miner, but information about places of work is not readily available. Of the 401 charges, 159 related to alleged offences under section 5 of the Public Order Act 1964, 80 to alleged offences of obstructing a police officer under section 51 of the Police Act 1964, and 72 to alleged offences under the Criminal Damage Act 1971. The remaining 90 charges relate to a wide range of offences extending from riot (nine charges) to offences under the House to House Collections Act.

"The Sentence of the Court"

Mr. Hayward asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to publish a new edition of the handbook "The Sentence of the Court".

Mr. Hurd: I am glad to say that a new edition is published today and is being distributed to all judges and magistrates. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library.

Fraud

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) of the cases of fraud reported to the Metropolitan police company fraud department since 1979 (i) how many in each year were subsequently reported to the Department of Trade and Industry and (ii) of the cases subsequently reported to the Department of Trade and Industry how many in each year resulted in prosecutions by the relevant prosecuting solicitor's department; and how many were successful in each instance;

(2) of the cases of fraud reported to the Metropolitan police company fraud department since 1979 (i) how many cases in each year were subsequently reported to the relevant prosecuting solicitor's department and (ii) of the cases subsequently reported to the relevant prosecuting solicitor's department, how many in each year resulted in prosecutions conducted by that department; and how many were successful in each instance;

(3) of the cases of fraud reported to the Metropolitan police company fraud department in each year since 1979 (i) how many cases in each year were subsequently reported to the Director of Public Prosecutions and (ii) of the cases subsequently reported to the Director of Public Prosecutions how many in each year resulted in prosecutions conducted by the Director of Public Prosecutions; and how many were successful in each instance;

(4) of the cases of fraud reported to the Metropolitan police company fraud department since 1979 (i) how many cases were referred to them by the Department of Trade and Industry and (ii) how many cases in each year were referred to it by the Director of Public Prosecutions;

(5) how many cases of fraud were reported to the Metropolitan police company fraud department in each year since 1979.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 March, columns 47-48]: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that information more detailed than that provided in the report of the Fraud Trials Committee (page 245) could be provided only at disproportionate cost, because such information is recorded only on the case files, which would need to be examined individually.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department of the cases of fraud reported to the City of London police fraud squad since 1979 (i) how many cases in each year were referred to it by the Department of Trade and Industry and (ii) how many cases in each year were referred to them by the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 March 1986, c. *48*]: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the City of London that this information is not available.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

USA (Visas)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of negotiations with the United States Administration on proposals to end the requirement for all United Kingdom citizens to obtain a visa to enter the United States of America.

Mr. Eggar: An Immigration Bill, which includes a provision for the establishment of a pilot programme to waive the non-immigrant visa requirement, is under consideration in the United States Congress. We expect that if a pilot programme were to be adopted, the United Kingdom would be one of the countries covered by it.

Iran-Iraq War (Chemical Weapons)

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent report of the United Nations Secretary-General's mission to investigate allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the conflict between Iran and Iraq.

Mr. Renton: We unreservedly support the statement made by the President of the Security Council on 21 March on the recent report of the United Nations Secretary-General's mission to investigate chemical weapons use in the Iran-Iraq conflict. That report unanimously concluded that chemical weapons had been used by Iraqi forces against Iranian forces. We greatly regret that Iraq has been clearly shown to have been in violation of the Geneva protocol of 1925, which prohibits the use of such weapons. At the same time, we fully share the concern expressed in the statement about the risk of an extension of the conflict and fully endorse the call for respect for the territorial integrity of neighbouring states. We also fully support the call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, which would open the way to a negotiated and comprehensive settlement to this tragic conflict.

This further instance of chemical weapons use emphasises the need for a comprehensive ban on this horrible class of weapons. We trust that the other

participants in the negotiations in Geneva, which are currently being chaired by the United Kingdom representative to the conference on disarmament, will join us in a renewed effort to bring them to a successful conclusion.

SCOTLAND

Justice of the Peace Courts

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends in the near future to review the powers of justice of the peace courts.

Mr. John MacKay: Justice of the peace courts were replaced in 1975 by district courts. The Government have no plans to undertake a specific review of the powers of the district courts in the near future; but their powers and jurisdiction are kept under review and have been increased or extended in recent years under the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980, the Transport Act 1982 and the Increase of Criminal Penalties etc. (Scotland) Order 1984.

Fisheries Offences

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration has been given by the Scottish Courts Administration to the recommendation by the Scottish Affairs Committee in its second report, HC 237, 1985-86, that fisheries offences should be treated more seriously.

Mr. John MacKay: The Government are satisfied that the maximum penalties are adequate. The fine or other penalty to be imposed in any individual case is a matter for the court; the Scottish Home and Health Department has drawn the Committee's views to the attention of the Sheriffs Association.

Children and Young Persons

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many orders have been made under subsection 2 of section 18 of the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937 in each of the past four years.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is not held centrally.

Electorate Statistics

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the Scottish regions in order of percentage growth in electorate since 1980; and what has been the percentage growth and actual figures in each case.

Mr. John MacKay: The information for the Scottish regions and islands areas for the period 1980-86 is set out in the table.

Regions and Islands areas	*Actual increase*	*Percentage increase*
Grampian	32,063	9·1
Highland	10,779	7·8
Dumfries and Galloway	6,428	6·0
Orkney	809	5·7
Shetland	873	5·7
Fife	13,683	5·4
Central	9,327	4·5
Lothian	21,485	3·7
Borders	2,904	3·7
Western Isles	633	2·8
Tayside	7,458	2·5
Strathclyde	19,954	1·1

Departmental Suppliers (Payment)

Mr. Ottaway asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average time it takes his Department to pay suppliers of goods and services to his Department.

Mr. Rifkind: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Payment is generally made within 28 days of the date of receipt of an account or, where applicable, within the period stipulated in the contract.

Housing (Waiting Lists)

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of people on new town waiting lists in Scotland at 31 March in each of the years 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Information about numbers on waiting lists maintained by new town development corporations over the period in question is not compiled on a uniform basis and does not enable me to give a meaningful reply.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of people on Housing Association waiting lists in Scotland at 31 March in each of the years 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Hypothermia

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland in which of the last 10 years the highest number of hypothermia deaths has been recorded in Scotland; in which month of the last 10 years the highest monthly figure has been recorded; and if he will give the respective figures.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer my hon. Friend to the replies given to the questions by the hon. Member for Dundee East (Mr. Wilson) on 29 January 1986, at column 550, 10 February 1986, at columns 343-44, and 18 March 1986, at columns 138-42.

The highest number of deaths mentioning hypothermia occurred in 1979, when there were 259 deaths. The table shows the highest monthly figure in each of the last 10 years.

Deaths mentioning Hypothermia
Month in which highest number of deaths occurred and Number of deaths in that month

	Number
December 1976	56
January 1977	39
February 1978	68
January 1979	86
January 1980	44

	Number
December 1981	85
January 1982	70
February 1983	38
January 1984	53
January 1985	65

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Dundee, East, 10 March, *Official Report*, column *374*, he can now give provisional figures to show the number of deaths in Scotland in February with any mention of hypothermia on the death certificate.

Mr. John MacKay: The provisional figure for February 1986 is 27.

Joint Liaison Committees

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland in reference to Scottish Office NHS circular No. 1985 of 24 April 1985, paragraph 7, whether it is his practice for papers relating to meetings of the relevant committees to be made available to all organisations which ask for them.

Mr. Rifkind: The right hon. Member presumably intended to refer to NHS circular No. 1985(GEN)18. Paragraph 7 of this circular advised that papers relating to the meetings of joint liaison committees set up for the purposes of joint planning should be made available to all organisations which ask for them. Information on the practices of individual committees is not collected centrally.

Cash Limits

Mr. Hirst asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he proposes to make any further changes to his Department's cash limits for 1985-86.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. I intend to make reductions, totalling £5·01 million, to five of the cash limits within my responsibility. The details are as follows:

£000

	Present cash limit	*New cash limit*	*Reduction*
XV:3 Regional and General Industrial Support, Scotland	131,600	131,200	400
XV:6 Roads, Transport and Environmental Services, Scotland	151,001	150,501	500
XV:14 Prisons, Hospitals and Community Health Services etc.	1,523,678	1,523,278	400
XV:15 Education, Arts, Libraries and Social Work, Scotland	149,386	149,176	210
SO/LA2 Capital Expenditure (mainly housing)	428,316	424,816	3,500

The reductions will partly offset increased expenditure of £18·748 million on vote XV:5 (Regional Assistance, Scotland) and £20·5 million on vote XV:8 (Housing Support Grant). Neither of these Votes is cash limited and the necessary Supplementary Estimates have been approved.

Teacher Training

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has reached decisions on the arrangements for intake to teacher training courses at Scottish colleges of education in 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Provisional arrangements suggested in a discussion paper issued by my Department have been the subject of consultation with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the General Teaching Council for Scotland and the Joint Committee of Colleges of Education in Scotland. In the light of views expressed by these bodies, comments from individual colleges of education and other organisations, and education authorities' estimates of their future secondary school staffing requirements, I have now decided that the total numbers of students to be admitted to pre-service teacher training courses in session 1986-87 should be 600 to the four-year primary BEd degree course, 300 to the one-year primary postgraduate course and 600 to secondary courses (on the basis that this last figure may be exceeded, if necessary, in order to admit any additional suitable applicants in mathematics, physics and business studies).

I am seeking the comments of the governing body of each college on the following proposed quotas within the overall levels mentioned above:

College	*Primary Intake*		*Secondary Intake*
	Proposed BEd Degree Course Quotas	*Proposed Postgraduate Course Quotas*	*Proposed Quotas*
Aberdeen	95	45	75
Craigie	70	30	—
Dundee	50	30	55
Dunfermline	—	—	40
Jordanhill	150	75	250
Moray House	120	68	95
St. Andrew's	115	52	85
Total	600	300	600

In regard to secondary intake, I am advising the college to give priority in session 1986-87 to students applying for admission to courses leading to a Teaching Qualification (Secondary Education) in business studies, mathematics, physics, chemistry, computing and religious education; and in regard to mathematics, physics and business studies in particular I am asking the colleges concerned to admit within their quotas the same numbers as in the current Session (for business studies the 1984-85 Session) and advising them that thereafter any additional numbers admitted will be over and above their quotas. I am also reminding each college of the need to consult the education authorities which it mainly serves in order to ensure that the numbers admitted both in individual priority subjects and in other subjects appropriately reflect regional needs.

These arrangements are without prejudice to any decisions about the structure of the college of education sector which I may in due course taking following my consultations on the report by the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council on a future strategy for higher education in Scotland (Cmnd. 9676).

Forestry Commission Sales

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the name, location, including county and map reference, size, purchaser, and price received, in respect of each of those forest estates sold to date by the Forestry Commission throughout Great Britain.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 March 1986, c. *484*.]: As the information requested, covering the period from the operative date of the Forestry Act 1981 to 10 March 1986 is lengthy, I am arranging for the details to be placed in the Library of the House. As far as the information regarding name of purchaser and price is concerned, arising from a recommendation contained in the 13th report (Session 1984-85) of the Committee of Public Accounts, the Forestry Commission seeks the agreement of purchasers of forestry land to the public disclosure of information about the transaction. This applies to sales completed after 12 June 1985 (the date of the PAC report). These details are not made public where a purchaser has not agreed to disclosure.

TRANSPORT

United Automobile Services

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many routes currently operated by United Automobile Services within the Berwick-upon-Tweed constituency are currently registered with the traffic commissioners.

Mr. David Mitchell: I do not have information on existing routes or on local service registrations at constituency level.

Public Transport (Ipswich)

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many route miles have been registered with the traffic commissioners in accordance with the requirements of the Transport Act 1985 in the area served by the Ipswich borough transport authority.

Mr. David Mitchell: Information on the routes of all services registered during January and February 1986 will be published by each of the traffic commissioners at the end of March, and the relevant issues of notices and proceedings will be available in the House of Commons Library. However, operators were not required to provide information about route miles.

Ferry Ports (Roads)

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is taking steps to seek to ensure that ferry ports are provided with road connections equal in quality to those provided for the proposed Channel fixed link.

Mr. David Mitchell: The need for new or improved national roads, including those to ferry ports, and priorities for expenditure are kept under regular review according to the level of usage. Allocation of resources for new local authority roads is, similarly, based on the needs of traffic.

Compulsory Purchase

Mr. Richard Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of times, in each of the last five years, that his Department has acquired the main residence of an individual by a compulsory purchase order, the number of cases, in each of the last five years, referred to the Lands Tribunal and the average length of time taken to complete an acquisition.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Dock Workers (Redundancies)

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many personnel have been released on redundancy terms from the Port of London Authority since 1 October 1983 up to the present date; and what is the total money paid by Her Majesty's Government towards the cost of those redundancies.

Mr. Ridley: The number of registered dock workers and others employed by the Port of London Authority who have taken voluntary severance since 1 October 1983 is 1,398; the Government have contributed £26·5 million towards the cost of those severances.

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many personnel have been released on redundancy terms from the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company since 1 October 1983 up to the present date; and what is the total money paid by Her Majesty's Government towards the cost of those redundancies.

Mr. Ridley: The number of registered dock workers and others employed by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company who have taken voluntary severance since 1 October 1983 is 724; the Government has contributed £18·3 million towards the cost of those severances.

Cycling Accidents

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will take immediate steps to facilitate the co-ordination by local authorities, police and hospitals of their databases regarding cycling accidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A common reporting system (Stats 19) is used for all road accidents involving personal injury by police, local authorities, and central Government, who have access to a common database.

Hospital databases are the responsibility of area health authorities and these identify patients who are road accident victims. Hospital in-patient records contain confidential personal information and therefore cannot be made generally available. Suitably anonymised data have been extracted from these records and matched with accident circumstances recorded on Stats 19. Work on this is proceeding at the Transport and Road Research Laboratory.

Cycle accidents, particularly those involving no other vehicle, tend to be under-reported on Stats 19. Where cyclists are detained as inpatients following an accident, this will be recorded by the local health authority.

Air Services

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations his Department received concerning the amount of fifth and sixth freedom traffic carried by Air Canada on its services from Canada to Singapore via the United Kingdom; what representations were made to the Canadian Government on this matter at the recent air services agreement meeting; and what response was received.

Mr. Michael Spicer: British Airways has expressed concern about the amount of fifth freedom traffic carried between London and Singapore by Air Canada. My Department has concluded that the amount of this traffic is excessive under the terms of the United Kingdom-Canada air services agreement and has raised the matter with the Canadian Government. Further bilateral discussions on this and other United Kingdom-Canada aviation matters are expected towards the end of April.

Westminster Bridge

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions there have been between the Greater London council and his Department regarding the narrowing of Westminster bridge; and what the effect will be on the traffic flows once incorporated.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None. I understand that the GLC is installing cycle facilities on the eastern approach to the bridge and a road safety scheme on the western approach. It has been for it to consider the effects on traffic flows. On 1 April responsiblity for the schemes will pass to Lambeth and Westminster respectively.

Vehicle Tests

Mr. Peter Brunivels asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many Ministry of Transport tests have been undertaken in each of the past 10 years and in the current year to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information for the years to 1984 is published in "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1974-84", a copy of which is in the Library. Figures for 1985 and 1986 to date are not yet available.

Coaches (Parking and Access)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish his report on the review of parking and access for coaches in London.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The report "Tourist Coaches in London" was published last Thursday. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Automatic Level Crossing (South Woodham Ferrers)

Dr. Michael Clark asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the installation of a barrier-less automatic level crossing in South Woodham Ferrers, Essex; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Chelmsford borough council made a statutory representation on the application by the British Railways Board for authority to install an automatic open level crossing (locally monitored) at South Woodham Ferrers. In addition, I have received a number of letters from local residents objecting to the board's proposals. All these representations were carefully considered before the decision was made to grant the board's application, which complied fully with the Department's published requirements.

ENVIRONMENT

Sewage Disposal

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how much finance has been provided by his Department for research and development into disposal methods of sewage sludge by methods other than sea deposition;

(2) how much finance has been provided by his Department on research and development into methods of sea disposal of sewage sludge, treated and untreated, in each year since 1980.

Mr. John Patten: Since 1980 my Department has financed research into the environmental and public health aspects of methods of disposing of sewage sludge as follows:

(£'000)

	Sea disposal	*Other methods*
1980-81	60	160
1981-82	70	216
1982-83	112	280
1983-84	140	395
1984-85	120	377
*1985-86	100	340

* Estimated

The research on sea disposal does not distinguish between treated and untreated sludge.

Water Pollution

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the number of water pollution incidents recorded by each water authority in each year since 1980-81; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the number of prosecutions for water pollution offences taken by each water authority in each year since 1980-81; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The number of reported water pollution incidents and the number of prosecutions for water pollution offences taken by each English water authority in each year since 1980-81 are:

Reported Pollution Incidents

	1980-81	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Thames	1,531	1,426	1,584	1,792	1,902
Southern	1,196	1,300	1,327	1,400	1,574
North West	1,290	1,350	1,288	1,385	2,241
Severn Trent	2,583	2,401	2,681	3,354	4,372
Wessex	N/A	N/A	790	966	1,125
South West	1,057	1,055	1,140	1,600	1,685
Anglian	968	1,095	1,077	1,288	1,557
Northumbrian	501	509	544	613	654
Yorkshire	1,071	1,136	1,020	1,165	1,536
	Prosecutions				
Thames	5	6	5	3	5
Southern	4	7	15	2	15
North West	17	19	16	68	70
Severn Trent	12	18	16	20	23
Wessex	10	11	15	30	29
South West	10	8	7	13	12
Anglian	13	30	21	20	17
Northumbrian	5	0	0	1	2
Yorkshire	15	30	29	16	33

Many incidents are minor and it is often difficult to obtain firm evidence as to the source of the pollution. In any case, water authorities will often prefer to act by discussion and persuasion rather than mount formal action.

In July last year the Government completed the introduction of all the main provisions of part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974. These provide a comprehensive framework for the protection of the water environment and include the extension of controls to cover all coastal, esturial and inland waters. The Government are also considering whether to implement fully and extend the powers under which areas can be designated within which certain activities liable to cause pollution can be prohibited or controlled.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of effluent discharges by each water authority which were not in compliance with their consent conditions in each year since 1980-81; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Routine information on compliance by the English water authorities with their consents for the discharge of effluents has not been held by my Department. However, following the implementation of section 34 of the Control of Pollution Act, water authorities are now required, as a condition of discharge consents, to report annually on those works which fail to comply with the terms of their consents. The first reports, for the year ended 31 December 1986, are due to be submitted early in 1987.

Copies of consents, together with the results of analyses of effluent samples are contained in registers maintained by authorities and these are now open to public inspection.

New Towns Commission

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to publicise the powers of the New Town Commission in new towns; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: The powers of the Commission for the New Towns are set out in part II of the New Towns Act 1981 as amended by the New Towns and Urban Development Corporations Act 1985. In addition, the legislation consolidated in the Housing Act 1985 provides that the commission's residential tenants are secure tenants, as are tenants of development corporations. This means that the position of such tenants is unaffected by the transfer of a development corporation's rented housing to the commission. In towns where the development corporation was wound up and its assets transferred to the commission after 15 November 1985, the commission has powers to carry out or authorise the development of new town land in accordance with proposals for development approved by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State under section 7(1) of the 1981 Act before the date of transfer of assets. Certain of the commission's powers may not be exercised without the authority of my right hon. Friend. In carrying out its functions in respect of any new town, the commission must have regard, among other things, to the convenience and welfare of people living, working or carrying on business there.

Basildon

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from Basildon council about the future of the development corporation over the last four years.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend has received no representations in this period other than in response to the statutory consultations initiated in July last year as a

preliminary to the making of an order under section 41 of the New Towns Act 1981 winding up the corporation. The council expressed the view that the life of the development corporation should be prolonged beyond the proposed wind-up date, now confirmed, of 1 April 1986. The council expressed concern over employment generation, housing and roads. The Commission for the New Towns will carry forward the new town road programme and pursue the question of housing transfer. The commission will also promote employment generation, as it does in respect of all the towns where it has taken over the assets of a development corporation.

Lead Shot

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he now has to introduce regulations to control the sale and import of lead shot for fishing purposes from 1 January 1987, following his predecessor's statement on 17 July 1985 about voluntary measures to switch to non-toxic alternatives to lead shot and thereby to avoid swan deaths.

Mr. Waldegrave: Progress towards the voluntary withdrawal of lead fishing weights has been closely monitored during the fishing season which ended recently, and the evidence is currently being analysed. I shall be considering the results very carefully and hope to be in a position to announce the outcome in early summer.

In the meantime, we shall shortly be initiating consultations on regulations under section 100 of the Control of Pollution Act so that if necessary they may be brought into effect on 1 January 1987.

Greater London Enterprise Board

Mr. Bidwell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received seeking the continuation of the Greater London Enterprise Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Various representations have been received regarding the Greater London Enterprise Board. The future of the board rests with those London borough councils which are taking up membership of the board.

Wildlife Inspectorate

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, further to his answer of 19 February, *Official Report*, column *214*, he will identify the appropriate enforcement agency or agencies to which the Wildlife Inspectorate provides expert advice.

Mr. Waldegrave: The enforcement agencies to which the Wildlife Inspectorate may, when requested, provide expert advice concerning possible offences under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 can be any police force, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. In the case of legislation governing trade in endangered species the enforcement agencies to which the Wildlife Inspectorate may provide expert advice can be any police force, Her Majesty's Customs and Excise or official agencies in other countries.

Bloodstock Breeders

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from representatives of bloodstock breeders calling for the introduction of legislation to reverse the Whitsbury Manor stud decision in advance of a hearing before the Court of Appeal since the reply by the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) of 7 May 1985 to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham), *Official Report*, column *307*; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have received 130 letters from representatives of bloodstock breeders since 1 May 1985. The decision of the Court of Appeal, which is still awaited in this case, remains central to consideration of what action, if any, should be taken.

Webbers Yard, Dartington

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 18 March, he will give details of the steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to urge the European Commission to make an early decision on the application for a grant for a new road at Webbers Yard, Dartington; and if he will estimate the likely timing of a decision.

Mr. Tracey: Since my answer of 18 March the European Commission has given the Department of Trade and Industry, which leads on European regional development fund matters, its view on the standing of schemes submitted for grant-aid under the transitional arrangements in relation to descheduled areas. The Commission considers that because these areas lost their assisted area status 15 months ago, it is not appropriate to reassess in the context of the 1986 bid any projects submitted under the transitional arrangements which were not considered to be of sufficient priority to merit ERDF aid in 1985.

The final decision on ERDF assistance rests with the European Commission. The Webbers Yard will not therefore receive ERDF grant-aid. Officials are writing to all applicants affected by the decision.

Water Authorities (Land Disposal)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will discuss with the chairman of the Countryside Commission assistance to non-governmental organisations attempting to purchase land to be disposed of by water authorities following his circular requesting them to sell such land.

Mr. Waldegrave: Water authorities have already been given guidance on the need to bear in mind environmental considerations when considering the disposal of land. I am of course happy to receive representations from the chairman of the Countryside Commission or others on any particular problems.

Limited Companies

Mr. Dover asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department collects about the limited companies that have been set up by local authorities in England and Wales over the last 10 years.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department does not collect information in any systematic way on limited companies set up by local authorities. If my hon. Friend cares to write to me about any particular concern, I will consider it carefully.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to provide that the rate support grant for 1986-87 will be paid to local authorities at the level corresponding to the estimated expenditure resolved upon by its members, rather than at the level corresponding to official returns to his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Block grant payments are made from the beginning of each financial year on the basis of budgeted total expenditure certified by each authority's chief financial officer. Eventually they are adjusted in the light of outturn expenditure, certified by both the chief financial officer and the authority's auditor. My right hon. Friend has no immediate proposals to introduce legislation to change these arrangements.

Councillors (Surcharge or Disqualification)

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to remove any liability for surcharge or disqualification from a councillor who has attempted, but failed, to persuade his authority to conform with the balanced budget requirements of section 2 of the General Rate Act 1967; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am not persuaded that further legislation is needed. The existing procedures for repayment of moneys and disqualification, in sections 19 and 20 of the Local Government Finance Act 1982, are aimed only at those who are responsible for incurring or authorising unlawful expenditure or who are responsible for a loss or deficiency caused by their own wilful misconduct.

Victoria and Albert Museum

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement about the recent flood at the Victoria and Albert museum.

Sir George Young: On the night of 21-22 March a joint on a temporary water main at the Victoria and Albert museum failed, causing serious flooding of the basement area.

As I understand at the present, the leak was discovered by the museum's warding staff on a routine patrol at about 6.30 am on 22 March. The water main was immediately turned off by the warding staff, and flood water was pumped from the building with the assistance of the fire brigade. The PSA site control officer, and other engineering staff, were also called out and took immediate steps to ensure the safety of electrical supply services, and of heating and air conditioning plant in the building. Water supplies have now been restored and made safe.

As part of a planned programme of renewal and maintenance of the buildings at the museum, PSA's contractors are laying a new main drain to the east of the main museum building. To avoid possible damage to pipes by contractors' machinery, a new temporary water supply main has been laid to avoid these works. I understand that a connection was made from this temporary main to the museum's supply system at 4.15 pm on 21 March. This was the third connection of this kind to have been made during the course of these works. The new connection was monitored for two hours, and was working satisfactorily when the contractor left the site at about 6.15 pm.

I deeply regret the damage that has been caused to the Victoria and Albert's collection as a result of this unfortunate accident. The immediate concern must be to rescue and restore the damaged artefacts and if there is any way in which my Department can help, for example by providing accommodation, we shall do whatever we can. Meanwhile, in consultation with my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts, I have ordered a full independent investigation into the accident. I shall publish the report.

New Town Development Corporations

Mr. Hawksley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider as part of the arrangements for the winding-up of new town development corporations the transfer of their housing stock to bodies other than local authorities.

Mr. Tracey: Yes. One of the Government's key objectives is to diversify the ownership and management of public sector housing stock and to give tenants more say in the running of their estates. The process of finding permanent landlords for the 60,000 rented dwellings still in new town ownership may well provide valuable opportunities to further that objective. When the time comes in each new town to consider transfer of the housing provided by the development corporation we would be prepared to consider any proposals for an alternative to a transfer scheme under part III of the New Towns Act 1981 put forward by a corporation which it believes would be in the best long term interests of its tenants and which in our view would further the objectives of diversification and better management. Clearly there are a number of important considerations we would wish to bear in mind in considering such proposals, including the protection of tenants' rights and the financial terms proposed for transfer. We shall also have regard to the views of the tenants themselves, the local authorities and other interested bodies including representatives of the staff who may be affected by transfer.

We are of course not excluding in any case consideration of the option of a transfer to a local authority under part III. We will take all the possibilities into account in each case.

Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England

Dr. John Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the arrangements at the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England for ensuring the public funds are properly accounted for and spent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 February 1986, c. *678*]: As I indicated in my answer on 27 February, I was seriously concerned about the recent reports of weaknesses in the marketing division of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission, discovered by their internal audit team. The chairman and chief executive of the commission shared my concern.

My Department's responsibility is to ensure that the conditions attached to the commission's grant-in-aid conform to the terms of the Vote and that the controls applied by the commission conform with the requirements

both of propriety and of good financial management. It was the commission's own financial monitoring which identified the weaknesses in marketing division spending procedures. Part of the Department's control process is that the commission should have an effective internal audit unit. It was this internal audit unit which provided a detailed report and recommendations which have been or are in the process of being implemented. The unit has conducted 12 audits in the commission; it found significant weaknesses only in the marketing division.

Accordingly, the commission's chief executive was able to send my Department an immediate interim report on the issues raised. My noble Friend the Minister of State has since discussed this with the commission's chairman. I am satisfied that the commission has taken steps to improve its procedures in relation to its marketing division, is strengthening those procedures further and is continuing to monitor the situation closely. My noble Friend has asked for a further report on the corrective action being taken. He is also asking the external auditors of the commission to work closely with them on the implications. My Department's own internal audit unit will itself follow up the effectiveness of the action being taken by the commission.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Mortgage Interest Rate

Mr. Maxton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide a table on movements in the average building society mortgage interest rate to home buyers from January 1970 to the present time.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There is no information available on the average building society mortgage interest rate to home buyers prior to 1984. Such information for 1984 and 1985 is shown in "Financial Statistics" table 13.12. However, data on the Building Societies Association's recommended and advised level of mortgage rates on new mortgages back to 1970 is available in "A Compendium of Building Society Statistics", published by the Building Societies Association.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Alton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the changes announced in the Budget in the value added tax treatment of charities and appliances for the disabled will apply to those people with foot abnormalities who have to buy two pairs of shoes in order to have two shoes which fit.

Mr. Brooke: No. The VAT reliefs for aids for the handicapped cover surgical footwear designed solely for the relief of severe abnormality or severe injury, but do not extend to ordinary shoes.

Tax Allowances (Farmers)

Mr. Chope asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the tax allowances available to farmers in the financial year 1986-87.

Mr. Moore: Tax allowances available to farmers comprise the normal range of personal and business allowances and deductions; and there are also special provisions which enable them in certain circumstances to obtain relief when their profits fluctuate from year to year. In addition, persons engaged in husbandry may claim relief under the system of agricultural buildings allowances for the capital costs of constructing agricultural buildings and works.

Income Tax

Mr. McCrindle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will estimate the cost of reducing the standard rate of income tax to 25 per cent. and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will estimate the cost of raising personal tax allowances by 10 per cent., 20 per cent. and 30 per cent., respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Drugs

Mr. McCrindle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will estimate the percentage of passengers at airports and seaports in the British Isles who are checked on a random basis for the possession of drugs;

(2) if he will review the level of customs and excise manpower available at airports and seaports to carry out drug searches and seizures in the British Isles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Taxation

Mr. Rooker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the comparison between the yield in real terms in 1978-79 and what he is now proposing for 1986-87 in *(a)* direct taxes including national insurance and *(b)* indirect taxes.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 March 1986, c. *307-8*]: The figures are as follows:

£ billion

	1978-79	*1986-87*	*1986-87 prices* change*
(a) Direct taxes	55·5	68·4	+12·9
of which			
Income tax	(37·3)	(38·7)	(+1·4)
(b) Indirect taxes	58·5	75·4	+16·9
(c) Total taxes, royalties and national insurance and other contributions	114·0	143·8	+29·8

* deflated using the GDP deflator.

Mr. Rooker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated yield from all sources of taxation including excise and other duties for 1986-87; what was the comparable yield for 1978-79 revalued at 1986-87 prices; and if he will publish a breakdown by categories of the real increase in taxes between 1978-79 and 1986-87 similar to that in his answer of 29 March 1985, *Official Report*, column *370*.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 March 1986, c. *307-8*]: The estimated total yield from all sources of taxation, including local authority rates and national insurance contributions, is £144 billion in 1986-87; the

yield in 1978-79 revalued at 1986-87 prices using the GDP deflator is £114 billion. The other information requested is in the table.

£ billion, 1986-87 prices

	Change on 1978-79
Income tax	+14·4
Non-North Sea corporation tax*	+2·0
North Sea revenues†	+5·0
Capital taxes and stamp duties	+1·7
Employees' NICs	+4·7
Employers' NICs	+1·8
NIS	−4·1
LA rates	+4·3
Taxes on expenditure, excluding LA rates, NIS and stamp duties	+14·6
Other‡	−1·2
Total change|| in taxes, royalties and national insurance contributions	+29·8

* Including mainstream and advance corporation tax.
† Before advance corporation tax (ACT) set-off.
‡ Adjustments for ACT set off against North Sea corporation tax plus accruals adjustments.
|| Components do not sum to total because of rounding.

District Valuers Office, Port Talbot

Mr. John Morris asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will reconsider the proposal to close the district valuers office at Port Talbot.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to the reply*, 21 March 1986, c. *308*]: No. The proposal to close the Port Talbot office is part of a rationalisation of the valuation office network throughout England and Wales in which it is planned to reduce the number of local offices from 160 to 119 over the next three years. The changes to be made follow a detailed assessment of the work to be undertaken in the future and take account of the need to provide an effective and efficient service.

Charities

Mr. Freud asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the implications of the changes announced in the Budget in respect of charities for private schools with charitable status.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March 1986]: Charitable status is not affected by the Budget proposals on tax reliefs for charities, which will apply to all charities, including educational institutions that are charities.

THE ARTS

Acceptances in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Charles Wardle asked the Minister for the Arts whether Her Majesty's Government have accepted any items in lieu of tax in accordance with the arrangements announced by his predecessor on 26 July 1985.

Mr. Luce: I announced on 13 February, in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), at column 502, that I proposed to increase the 1985-86 cash limit on class V, vote 10 by £520,000 with a resulting call on the reserve. The relevant Supplementary Estimate was approved by Parliament on 18 March. I am pleased to say that the enhanced total provision on vote 10 has allowed the acceptance of a very important archive of papers of the Dukes of Portland and Newcastle. The amount satisfied in lieu of tax remains confidential to the estate concerned.

NORTHERN IRELAND

School Meals

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what provision will be made for school lunches in the light of the South Eastern Education and Library Board's £400,000 budget cut in milk and meals for 1986-87.

Dr. Mawhinney: The board is still considering how its financial allocation for 1986-87 is to be spent and has not yet submitted its financial scheme to the Department of Education for Northern Ireland. It is intended, however, that school meals will continue to be available and that existing arrangements to provide school meals free of charge to those eligible to receive them will not be affected.

IRA (Funding)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has about sources of funding to the Irish Republican Army.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. member to the answer I gave to a question by him on 30 January 1986 at column 596.

Republic of Ireland (Tricolour)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to be in a position to announce a decision on proposals to facilitate the flying of the tricolour of the Republic of Ireland *(a)* within Northern Ireland generally and *(b)* on public and Government buildings in Northern Ireland, specifically.

Mr. Scott: No such proposals are under consideration. The question of the Flags and Emblems (Display) Act (NI) 1954 will, along with other public order issues, be addressed later this year in the light of forthcoming changes in Great Britain public order law. The effect of the Act is to give a privileged status to displays of the union flag: it does not prohibit the flying of the tricolour in peaceful circumstances.

Suppliers (Payment)

Mr. Ottaway asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average time it takes his Department to pay suppliers of goods and services to his Department.

Dr. Boyson: The average time taken to pay suppliers of goods and services from the receipt of the invoice ranges from 48 hours to six weeks as the time taken to validate the invoice varies according to the goods and services supplied.

Gosford Castle Hotel

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what grants were given to assist the operation of a hotel in Gosford Castle, Markethill; if

Gosford Castle hotel is still operational; and whether arrangements will be made to require repayment of these grants in circumstances of the closure of this hotel.

Dr. Boyson: No grants were given to assist the operation of a hotel in Gosford Castle, Markethill. I understand the hotel ceased to operate in May 1985.

Armagh Prison

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the closing of Her Majesty's prison Armagh, the transfer of prisoners from there, and the future of the premises.

Mr. Scott: The 31 women inmates from Her Majesty's prison, Armagh, were transferred to the new women's prison at Maghaberry on 18 March. This has accommodation and facilities of a very high standard and replaces Armagh which has been closed. The de-commissioning of the premises at Armagh is now under way. The final disposal of the property has not yet been determined.

Secretary of State (Irish Club Speech)

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will place in the Library the text of his St. Patrick's night speech at the Irish Club.

Mr. Tom King: The speech I gave on 17 March was drawn from notes and is not therefore available. However, I did release a section to the press and the press notice was placed in the Library.

Community and Voluntary Groups (Belfast)

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will make a statement outlining his assessment of the situation facing community and voluntary groups who are normally dependent on grant aid received through Belfast city council, detailing the number of jobs and the type of projects which are now at risk;

(2) if he will consider giving direct grant aid under the Community Relations (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1975 to those community and voluntary organisations whose funding through local authorities is presently under threat;

(3) what consideration has been given to giving direct grants for the new financial year to those community and voluntary organisations who normally receive grant aid through Belfast city council and deducting the amount paid in such grants from any funds which might be forwarded to Belfast city council.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government consider it regrettable that the actions taken by Belfast city council have created serious problems for community and voluntary groups. I understand that 37 full-time and 10 part-time jobs are directly affected. Projects and services involved include community associations, community resource centres, citizens' advice bureaux, and play organisations, serving a wide range of client groups in local communities.

I am anxious that support from local councils for such organisations should continue beyond 31 March 1986. The funding of these groups remains, however, a matter for the local councils.

Wines, Spirits, Beer and Tobacco

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many workers were employed in the wines and spirits industry in Northern Ireland in June 1979, and how many at the latest available date.

Dr. Boyson [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 March 1986, c. *438-9*]: The number of employees in the wines and spirits industry is as follows:

June 1979: 183
December 1985: 161

These figures relate to producers with more than 25 employees. It is not possible to identify employees involved in the distribution of these goods.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many workers were employed in the brewing industry in Northern Ireland in June 1979; and how many at the latest available date.

Dr. Boyson [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 March 1986, c. *438-9*]: The number of employees in the brewing industry is as follows:

June 1979: 547
December 1985: 501

These figures relate to producers with more than 25 employees. It is not possible to identify employees involved in the distribution of these goods.

Divis Flats

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the total numbers of *(a)* families, *(b)* single parent families, *(c)* single households and *(d)* people of pensionable age or over living in the Divis flats at present; and what were the respective annual totals in each category from 1968 for the years for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March 1986]: The information is as follows:

(a) 251 families
(b) 108 single parent families
(c) 133 single households
(d) 158 heads of households of pensionable age or over

These figures are based on a 71 per cent. response to a 1980 survey by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive of the 700 households in the 12 deck access blocks in Divis. Figures for other years since 1968 are not available.

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's estimates for the Divis flats of *(a)* the total cost of refurbishing the whole complex, *(b)* the total cost of the combination of refurbishment and demolition currently proposed by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and *(c)* the average cost per dwelling, including loan and interest charges, for refurbishment, given a 30-year estimated life span.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March 1986]: *(a)* £5 million (estimated) excluding Pound and St. Brendans due for demolition, *(b)* Milford block pilot refurbishment £800,000 (estimated). Demolition of Pound and St. Brendans—up to date figure not yet available, *(c)* £11,000-£12,000 (estimated) per dwelling.

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many residents in the Divis flats have been

subject to action under the Payments for Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) in each year from 1968 to the present.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March 1986]: During the 12 months up to 21 March 1986, 195 residents were subject to action under the Act. Figures for earlier years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the current levels of arrears and the number of tenants in arrears in payments for *(a)* rents, *(b)* rates and *(c)* heating by type in the Divis complex and the annual averages from 1968 for the years for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March 1986]: The available information is as follows:

(a) and *(b)* Current rent and rates arrears £127,502—327 debtors.

(c) Current district heating arrears £140,463—145 debtors.

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the numbers of *(a)* illegal tenancies and *(b)* tenancies for which the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has issued use and occupation books in the Divis complex at the present time; and what are the annual averages of each from 1968 for the years for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March 1986]: The available information is as follows:

(a) There were 19 illegal occupants at 21 March 1986.

(b) Nineteen.

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the figures for the number of dwellings in the Divis complex *(a)* occupied, *(b)* under-occupied, *(c)* overcrowded and *(d)* vacant at the present time; and what was the annual average in each category from 1968 for the years for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March 1986]: The available information is as follows:

(a) 562

(b) 61

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the average annual costs from 1968 for the years for which figures are available of *(a)* repairs, *(b)*maintenance and *(c)* services for the Divis flats, each according to (i) total, (ii) emergency work, (iii) normal work, A list and (iv) planned work, B list.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March 1986]: The information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many residents of the Divis flats have received *(a)* certificated housing benefit, *(b)* housing benefit supplement and *(c)* standard housing benefit since November 1983; and what are the total amounts in each category paid to Divis residents since the introduction of housing benefit.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March 1986]: The available information is as follows:

(a) 415 residents are in receipt of certificated housing benefit.

(b) 36 residents of Divis are in receipt of housing benefit supplement.

(c) 135 residents are in receipt of standard housing benefit.

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's estimates of *(a)* total costs and *(b)* the breakdown of costs for (i) the total demolition of the Divis flats, (ii) the demolition of the two blocks currently under consideration and (iii) the building of two storey houses to replace the existing flats, including any land, consultant and other significant costs.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March 1986]: *(a)* The Northern Ireland Housing Executive does not consider total demolition of all the deck access blocks at Divis an appropriate solution — no costs for total demolition or replacement housing are available.

(b) Up-to-date figures for the demolition of Pound and St. Brendans are not available.

New Dwellings

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are *(a)* the average costs by type, including architect and other fees, of building new dwellings in Belfast and *(b)* the estimated costs by type, including building costs, fees, interest, maintenance and management charges over a 60-year period of new dwellings in Belfast.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March 1986]: *(a)* Based on tenders received during 1985, the average cost of new houses, including fees, were as follows:

Size	*2 person*	*3 person*	*4 person*	*5 person*	*6 person*	*7 person*	*8 person*
House	14,128	17,683	17,103	18,759	20,080	32,644	34,878
External works	2,729	2,729	2,729	2,729	2,729	2,729	2,729
Site development works	2,982	2,982	2,982	2,982	2,982	2,982	2,982
	19,839	23,394	22,814	24,470	25,791	38,355	40,589
Fees	1,786	2,105	2,053	2,202	2,321	3,452	3,653
	£21,625	25,499	24,867	26,672	28,112	41,807	44,242

(b) The information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Unfit Dwellings

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many statutorily unfit dwellings there are in *(a)* the catchment area for Divis residents and *(b)* west Belfast as a whole.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March 1986]: Information in the form requested is not readily available. However, the 1984 house condition survey established that 7 per cent. (or 1,262 dwellings) of dwellings in west Belfast were unfit for human habitation.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations were received from the Government of the Republic of Ireland during the course of negotiations on the Anglo-Irish agreement as to the role to be played in such negotiations by the representatives of the Unionist population.

Mr. Tom King [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March 1986]: The negotiations leading up to the signing of the Anglo-Irish agreement were between the United Kingdom and Irish Governments and it was understood that no political parties would participate.

WALES

Derelict Land

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales what total acreage of reclaimed derelict land in Wales in 1975 and 1985 is attributable to coal mining activities.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Land reclamation schemes often involve works in more than one year. The following information is therefore provided on the basis of schemes approved to start in the years in question.

In 1975 the Welsh Office approved schemes to reclaim 1,020 acres of derelict land attributable to coal mining activities. In 1985 the Welsh Development Agency approved schemes for the reclamation of 260 acres of derelict land attributable to coal mining activities.

The decline in the reclamation of coal mining related land between 1975 and 1985 reflected the very considerable reclamation programme of colliery and tip complexes which had already been undertaken.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total acreage of derelict land in Wales in 1975 and 1985.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I refer the hon. Lady to my answer of 6 February 1986 at column *245*.

Reclaimed Land

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales what acreage of land was reclaimed in Wales in 1975 and 1985.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Land reclamation schemes often involve works in more than one year. The following information is therefore provided on the basis of schemes approved to start in the years in question.

In 1975 the Welsh Office approved schemes to reclaim 1,322 acres of derelict land. In 1985 the Welsh Development Agency approved schemes for the reclamation of 662 acres of derelict land.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much money was spent by *(a)* the Welsh Development Agency, *(b)* local authorities and *(c)* other public bodies in Wales on land reclamation in 1974-75 and 1984-85; and how much is planned for 1986-87.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: In 1974-75 the Welsh Office provided 85 per cent. grant aid to local authorities for approved expenditure on land reclamation. In that year the Welsh Office provided grant aid of £2 million for land reclamation work undertaken by local authorities costing £2·35 million.

The Welsh Development Agency now gives 100 per cent. grant aid to local authorities for approved expenditure on land reclamation. In 1984-85 the agency provided grant aid of £9·8 million for local authority land reclamation schemes.

The agency plans to spend £12 million on land reclamation in 1986-87. We have no record of expenditure on land reclamation by other public bodies.

Electorate Statistics

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the Welsh counties in order of percentage growth in electorate since 1980; and which has been the percentage growth and actual figures in each case.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information is given in the following table:

Growth in local government electorate by county, since 1980

	Electorate		*Change 1980 to 1986*	
	1980	*1986*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Powys	83,000	88,779	5,779	7·0
Clwyd	292,339	309,389	17,050	5·8
Gwynedd	174,122	182,689	8,565	4·9
Dyfed	252,946	261,985	9,039	3·6
Gwent	325,431	335,489	10,058	3·1
West Glamorgan	281,099	286,508	5,409	1·9
Mid Glamorgan	401,495	404,975	3,480	0·9
South Glamorgan	288,149	289,573	1,424	0·5

GCSE

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received on the matter of introducing the curriculum for the general certificate of secondary education in September; and how many such representations requested postponement for a year.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Thirty-two, up to and including 18 March 1986, all requesting postponement.

Beef

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received about the effect of the European farm prices package on beef production in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have received a number of representations about the Commission's price proposals as they affect the beef sector and particularly about the proposed changes in beef support arrangements. We shall seek to ensure that any revised arrangements do not discriminate against beef producers in the United Kingdom and will continue to stress the benefit that the beef variable premium scheme gives to producers and consumers.

Hospital Beds

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of new beds provided in

each of the health authorities in Wales since May 1979 and the number of approved closures in each authority between May 1979 and the present time.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Since May 1979, 395 new beds have been provided in Clwyd health authority, 529 in Gwynedd health authority and 497 in Mid Glamorgan health authority. These are mainly as a result of the commissioning of new district general hospitals in Rhyl, Bangor and Bridgend.

The number of approved hospital closures in each authority is given in the table, together with changes in the bed complement.

Health authority	*Number of Approved hospital closures since 1979*	*Overall change in bed complement since 1979*
Clwyd	3	- 152
Gwynedd	4	+ 60
Powys	1	- 230
East Dyfed	1	- 325
Pembrokeshire	—	nil
West Glamorgan	—	- 82
Mid Glamorgan	6	- 359
South Glamorgan	—	- 197
Gwent	1	- 356

Most of these reductions are in mental illness and mental handicap beds, largely due to my right hon. Friend's policy that more patients should be cared for in the community.

Singleton Casualty Unit

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department had any objection to the Swansea and Iliw Valley community health council having a copy of the Welsh Office letter to the West Glamorgan health authority authorising the reopening of the Singleton casualty unit; and if he will investigate why the health authority only gave the press a version of the letter which excluded reference to the desirability of a 24-hour service.

Mr. Mark Robinson: A copy of the letter was sent to the Community Health Council by the Department and the text was available to the media. Statements by the authority are a matter for it.

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for Wales what scope there is for appointment of hospital doctors to man the Singleton casualty unit within the current establishment of the West Glamorgan health authority; what consultation has taken place or is planned between his Department and the health authority about establishing a 24-hour service; and what constraints have been identified.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Subject to the standard arrangements whereby certain new posts require the approval of our Department, the levels and deployment of staff are operational matters for the health authority. The authority was asked to keep the opening hours of the unit under review and to continue to consult the Community Health Council.

Cash Limits

Mr. Grist asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to make any changes to his Department's cash limits in the current year.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Yes. The cash limit on class XVI, vote 1, is being reduced by £14,790,000 from £186,459,000 to £171,669,000. This reduction reflects the fact that spending on the trunk road programme has fallen below the available provision, mainly on account of a lower rate of spend than forecast on schemes under construction.

Also, the cash limit on class XVI, vote 5, is being reduced by £7,227,000 from £46,610,000 to £39,383,000. This reduction largely relates to provision for the Welsh Development Agency and reflects the agency's success in achieving higher than estimated income, which has allowed it to carry out its programmes at a lower net cost to the Government.

Finally, the cash limit on class XVI, vote 7, is being reduced by £500,000 from £33,031,000 to £32,531,000. This reduction reflects mainly the slippage of expenditure in respect of the purchase of a main frame computer.

These savings are being used to offset most of the increased expenditure arising from spring supplementary increases in class XVI, votes 2, 3 and 8.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Horses and Mares

Mr. Latham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from the Thoroughbred Breeders' Association proposing that horses and mares should be officially classified as agricultural animals; and what response he has made.

Mrs. Fenner: I have received a number of representations from the Thoroughbred Breeders' Association. In reply I have pointed out that under present legislation horses and mares used in the farming of the land are recognised as agricultural animals while those kept for breeding or riding are not.

North-east Drift Net Fishery

Mr. Onslow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will now ask all those who supplied him with commercially confidential information during his inquiry into the effect of the north-east drift net fishery whether they have any objection to its publication;

(2) where, and in what form, the statistics used in his inquiry into the effect on salmon stocks of the north-east drift net fishery have already been published, where these are not commerically confidential.

Mr. Gummer: The basic statistical information used in the internal report is catch data which has appeared in tabular form in a number of publications, in particular the booklet "Taking Stock" published in 1974 by the Association of River Authorities—a copy of which is being placed in the Library of the House—the annual reports published by the Northumbrian and Yorkshire water authorities, the booklet "Scottish Salmon Catch Statistics 1952-1981," produced by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, and subsequent statistical reports produced by the same Department, all of which are available in the Library of the House.

The internal report also drew on statistical data appearing in "Fisheries Research Technical Report No. 67", published by my Department in 1982, on the effects

of the English north-east salmon fisheries on Scottish salmon catches. A copy of this report has already been placed in the Library of the House.

Other information appearing in the report was provided on the clear understanding that it would remain confidential. Moreover, the report involves internal advice to Ministers of a kind which it is not the normal practice to publish.

Farmers (Springfields)

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will list in the *Official Report* amounts of compensation paid to local farmers by British Nuclear Fuels Limited, Springfields in respect of sickness to their cattle.

Mrs. Fenner: I understand from British Nuclear Fuels plc that no such payments have been made.

Seabirds (South Shields)

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) why his wildlife incident unit, having collected on 10 March seabirds found dead for no apparent reason on the seashore at South Shields, informed the hon. Member for South Shields on 12 March that autopsies were not possible on account of the delay since their collection;

(2) why his wildlife incident unit, having collected seabirds, which were found dead for no apparent reason, on the seashore of South Shields, refused to perform autopsies;

(3) why the seabirds found dead for no apparent reason on 8 March on the shore at South Shields and collected by his Department's wildlife incident unit on 10 March, were not autopsied at the Lasswade laboratories.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Wildlife Incident Unit

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what instructions he has issued to his wildlife incident unit changing its remit, since this was announced by his hon. Friend the Member for Medway (Mrs. Fenner) during the passage of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Refugees

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance he gives to refugees from the Horn of Africa to undergo training and then return to their home country.

Mr. Raison: We provide funds for the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which includes training refugees from this area, and we are continuing to give support to the World University Service for training Ethiopian refugees. In general we are finding increasingly that refugees are not allowed to return to their home countries after training.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the current level of support through the World University Service for the scholarship programme for Ethiopian refugees; what this will be in 1986-87; and what proposals he has for future funding.

Mr. Raison: In the present financial year our level of support is £375,000. In 1986-87 we expect to give £280,000. The World University Service is aware that I have not yet decided on later allocations but that our planning figure for 1987-88 is £135,000 and that I expect our support to cease in or about 1988-89.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will consider a shared funding scholarship scheme for refugees in which his Department would match support with that provided by educational institutions and voluntary agencies.

Mr. Raison: I do not think that support for a general shared funding scholarship scheme for refugees would be the best use of aid funds. If we decided on the merits of a particular case to assist the training of a group of refugees, we would be ready to consider sharing the cost with others.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what priority his Department gives to refugees within his policy for overseas students.

Mr. Raison: Support for refugee students is considered on a case by case basis and the priority accorded to any particular group depends on the extent to which they are likely to assist the economic and social development of overseas countries. An important factor is the likelihood of their early return home or to a neighbouring developing country.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance his Department gives to refugees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: In the financial year 1985-86 the ODA expects to spend £35 million on refugee assistance—an increase of £13 million over the previous year. Of this total, £20 million has been allocated to relief programmes in Africa.

Most of this assistance is being channelled through international organisations; about half is through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The Government will continue to ensure that Britain plays its full part in assisting refugees.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the level of funding in constant terms for scholarship schemes for refugees for each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Raison: Figures are as follows adjusted to the prices of the first year shown:

	£000
A. *Through World University Services (calendar year)*	
1976	1,086
1977	2,126
1978	1,381
1979	2,093
1980	1,906
1981	1,464

	£000
1982	840
1983	561
1984	337
1985	291

B. Assistance to a special Afghan Refugees Training Programme (financial year)

1982-83	104
1983-84	252
1984-85	350

C. Assistance to students and trainees from Namibia (financial year). About three quarters of this programme is for refugee education

1979-80	138
1980-81	125
1981-82	175
1982-83	156
1983-84	204
1984-85	254

D. Contribution to United Nations Educational and Training Programme for Southern Africa (financial year)

1975-76	70
1976-77	62
1977-78	62
1978-79	63
1979-80	60
1980-81	50
1981-82	—
1982-83	21
1983-84	21
1984-85	20

Ethiopia

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what long-term assistance he proposes for Ethiopia.

Mr. Raison: Our technical co-operation and training programme, which is expected to cost about £1 million a year, will bring long-term benefit, especially through health education and English language training. Ethiopia is the largest recipient of aid from the European development fund, with 230 million ecu (about £154 million) available for commitment between 1986 and 1990. Of this, the British share will be some £26 million.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to Ethiopian needs for vehicles and spare parts for the purposes of famine relief; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: The United Nations co-ordinator in Addis Ababa has estimated that an additional 556 vehicles, to a value of $20 million, and spare parts to a value of $30·5 million are required for the distribution of relief supplies in Ethiopia.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the availability of medical supplies and equipment in Ethiopia and the Sudan.

Mr. Raison: We do not have reliable information on the supplies available. However, the United Nations office for emergency operations in Africa estimates the cost of relief requirements for the health sector in 1986 at $17·45 million for Ethiopia and $14·43 million for Sudan.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what amounts of supplementary foods have been pledged to Ethiopia for 1986 to date; what has actually arrived; and what is the estimated net supplementary food need.

Mr. Raison: The World Food Programme reported on 18 March the following figures for food aid for Ethiopia in 1986 (in metric tonnes):

	Skimmed Milk Powder	*Edible Oil*	*Other supplementary foods*
Pledges	18,474	21,680	5,124
Deliveries	4,068	9,439	766

The figures for the estimated net supplementary food needs for Ethiopia in 1986 were included in my reply to the hon. Member on 17 February at column *23*.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about air transport facilities currently provided by donor countries to Ethiopia for the purposes of famine relief; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: The United Nations office for emergency operations in Africa reported on 1 February that German Luftwaffe and Red Cross aircraft were assisting famine relief operations in northern Ethiopia. I understand that Polish army helicopters are also helping with famine relief.

South Africa

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for increasing support for multi-racial educational and training programmes within South Africa.

Mr. Raison: I am considering how we can increase our support for such programmes and my chief education adviser will visit South Africa next month to advise on this.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support he gives through voluntary agencies for educational and training programmes for refugees from South Africa.

Mr. Raison: Our support for education and training for South African refugees is channeled not through voluntary agencies but through the United Nations educational training programme for Southern Africa (£50,000 this financial year) and the Commonwealth fund for technical co-operation (£60,000).

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans for increasing educational provision for refugees from South Africa.

Mr. Raison: We are in discussion with the Commonwealth secretariat on the scope of a new Commonwealth training scheme, which might include some awards for refugee students.

Africa (Conservation)

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he has given to the European Commission document "Conservation of Natural Resources and Countering Desertification in Africa", COM 86/16; and what policy he intends to adopt towards each of the recommendations contained in the document's summary and conclusions at the Council of Ministers meeting on 17 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: My views were set out in an explanatory memorandum sent to the Select Committee on European Legislation on 5 March. I broadly endorse the conclusions of the Commission document. The precise way in which they will affect the implementation of the aid programmes of the Community and its member states will need to be worked out in discussions with Governments of the affected countries.

SOCIAL SERVICES

General Medical Council

12. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he next plans to meet the chairman of the General Medical Council.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have no such present plans.

Severe Weather Payments

13. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has made any estimate of the numbers of households likely to be eligible for exceptionally severe weather payments following the cold February weather; and if he will estimate the likely total cost of the payments.

Mr. Major: It is not possible to make a reliable estimate at this stage. Information about numbers and costs will be collected when the period during which payments are likely to arise is over.

25. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the estimate of the total expenditure on exceptionally severe weather payments in the winters of 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Newton: The cost of single payments for extra fuel used during exceptionally severe weather was approximately £1·7 million in 1984-85. Information on payments made for this winter is not yet available. When the period during which payments are likely to arise is over, local offices will be asked to make a return so that the total number of payments made and the cost can be calculated.

31. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate the total amount of benefit paid out as exceptionally severe weather allowance during the last few months.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 24 February at column *470*.

44. **Mr. Marland** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the outcome of his review of the operation in the current year of exceptionally severe weather payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Park) on 24 March.

Embryo Experimentation

14. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he now plans to introduce legislation on embryo experimentation.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Government are aware of the strongly held views of many hon. Members about this issue. As my predecessor and I have indicated to the House, the Government intend to introduce legislation on this and other matters dealt with in the Warnock report on human fertilisation and embryology as soon as practicable.

Anti-Heroin Campaign

15. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the results of his Department's contribution to Her Majesty's Government's media anti-heroin campaign.

Mr. Whitney: Our campaign of education and information on the misuse of heroin is being independently evaluated. So far, the evaluation has indicated that the campaign for young people has been widely noticed and has conveyed factual information about the effects of heroin misuse. There are also indications that it may have had a favourable impact on young people's attitudes to heroin. The campaign for parents was less widely noticed.

Ambulance Services

16. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received regarding reductions in the provision of ambulance services.

Mr. Whitney: As I advised the hon. Member in my answer of 25 February at column *522* the Department has received a number of representations about various aspects of the ambulance service. Some of those have been concerned with the effects of local reorganisation. Others have been concerned with the application of the correct criteria of transport by the ambulance service, which is that it should be provided only when the patient has medical need for it.

Residential Homes

17. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to seek to change the requirements for registering residential homes for the elderly and nursing homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: As I said in my reply of 28 January at col. *487*, improved arrangements for registering and inspecting residential care and nursing homes came into force as recently as 1 January 1985. It is far too soon to assess what, if any, changes are needed. When the Department's social services inspectorate has completed its two-year study of the effects of the new arrangements, we shall be better able to judge the position.

Dental Treatment

18. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will institute a review into the extent to which dental treatment is dictated by the assessment of the patient's ability to pay rather than by the dentist's clinical judgment.

Mr. Hayhoe: No.

Nurses (Residential Accommodation)

19. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will consider compensating nurses who have been required to leave their nurses' homes as a result of Her Majesty's Government's policy of disposing of National Health Service property.

Mr. Hayhoe: Nurses who live in NHS accommodation do so at the discretion of the health authority concerned.

There can be no question of compensating any staff who are no longer to be offered accommodation, though some will have the opportunity to buy their home at discounts of between 32 and 60 per cent. off the current value, assuming vacant possession.

Under-fives (Leyton)

20. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children under five years old there are in Leyton; and how many nursery places there are.

Mr. Whitney: The number of children under five for the parliamentary constituency of Leyton in 1981 is estimated as 5,600. Data on nursery places are held centrally by social service authority. In the London borough of Waltham Forest, which includes Leyton, there were 450 day nursery places at 31 March 1985, equivalent to 30 places per thousand children under five.

Disabled People (Liverpool)

21. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many registered disabled people there are in Liverpool.

Mr. Newton: The latest figures available centrally indicate that there are 23,153 disabled persons registered with the city of Liverpool social services department, excluding those whose sole disability is a mental disorder.

District Health Authorities

22. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many chairmen of district health authorities have not been re-appointed from 31 March; and what criteria were used in deciding not to re-appoint an incumbent chairman.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 17 March to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory).

Social Workers

23. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has issued guidance to local authorities on the questions arising from violence against social workers by their clients.

Mr. Whitney: We have not issued general guidance to local authorities on this subject but in 1981 we sent them copies of the report of the working party on control and discipline in community homes which included consideration of violence in that type of home and how it might be avoided. It is for employing authorities to assess the level of risk to their staff and to take the necessary action. The nature of a social worker's job is such that risks of this kind are inherent especially when it brings him or her into contact with emotionally disturbed or mentally disordered clients.

Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee

24. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now take steps to implement the pharmaceutical services negotiating committee contract.

Mr. Hayhoe: Legislation which would allow the introduction, in full, of the new contract agreed between the Government and the representatives of community pharmacists is being introduced today.

War Pensioners

26. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the present number of war pensioners; and if he has any plans to increase the disregard from the current level of £4.

Mr. Major: It is estimated that 206,400 war disablement pensions, 61,350 war widows pensions and 5,290 other war pensions were being paid in the United Kingdom at the end of December 1985. We have no current plans to increase the supplementary benefit disregard of £4 week.

Board and Lodging Payments

27. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on work his Department has carried out or had commissioned on board and lodging payments for people in residential care and nursing homes since April 1985.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) on 17 March at columns *63-64*.

60. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in his review of the operation of the board and lodging regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We are currently carrying out the review of the financial limits for all types of supplementary benefit board and lodging allowances and, as I indicated to my hon. Friend in my reply to him on 28 January at column *782*, it is our aim to reach conclusions in time for any changes to be made with the July uprating.

Infertility

28. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money his Department has spent in each of the last three years as a contribution towards research into the causes of infertility amongst couples.

Mr. Whitney: The Department has not sponsored any research in this field in the last three years. The Medical Research Council is supporting research at a number of its centres, from its grant-in-aid under the science budget of the Department of Education and Science.

Welfare Food Scheme

29. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were affected by the change in the operation of the welfare food scheme announced in Health Notice (85) 36 of January 1986.

Mr. Whitney: The notice which made no substantive change to the welfare food scheme, relates to some 130,000 children under the age of one.

Retired People (Sheffield)

30. **Mr. Caborn** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the percentage change in the number of people in Sheffield over the age of retirement in the last 20 years.

Mr. Major: The information available is given in the table. Comparable figures for 1964 and for the percentage change between 1964 and 1984 are not available.

Metropolitan District of Sheffield

Mid-year	*Resident population over retirement age**
Estimated number	
1961	81,000
1981	109,500
1984	108,000
Percentage change	
1961-81	35
1961-84	33

* Age 65 for males and 60 for females.

36. **Miss Maynard** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people there were in Sheffield over the age of retirement in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985.

Mr. Major: The information available is given in the table. Figures for 1985 will be published in June in Table 2 of OPCS Monitor PP1 86/2.

Metropolitan District of Sheffield

*Estimated resident population over retirement age**	
Mid-year	*Number*
1979	106,500
1984	108,000

* Age 65 for males and age 60 for females.

Hypothermia

32. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many reported cases of hypothermia there were among the elderly people in the Greater London area in the recent exceptionally cold spell since 1 February; if he will have consultations with the relevant authorities to seek to counteract such cases in future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Information on the incidence of morbidity due to hypothermia is not available centrally. The provisional figure for the number of deaths with any mention of hypothermia on the death certificate registered in the Greater London area for persons aged 65 and over for the period 1-21 February inclusive is 15.

We have taken steps to see that elderly people and those caring for them get advice on how to minimise the effects of cold. A comprehensive pack of training materials and information on this subject for those in contact with elderly people is being developed by the Health Education Council. In the meantime, "Warmth in Winter", a leaflet published by the council, contains simple, practical advice for elderly people on keeping warm. A number of health and local authorities and voluntary organisations have produced similar material. We have also made arrangements to publicise the availability of supplementary benefit single payments for extra fuel used during periods of exceptionally severe weather.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give provisional figures to show the number of deaths in February 1986 with any mention of hypothermia on the death certificate in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales.

Mr. Whitney: The provisional numbers of deaths registered in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales during February 1986 with any mention of hypothermia on the death certificate, irrespective of whether it did or did not appear as the underlying cause of death, are 161 and 13 respectively.

Informal Carers

33. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he plans to issue guidance to local authorities on support for informal carers.

Mr. Whitney: We shall draw on experience gained from the relevant elements of the helping the community to care programme in deciding how best to develop our policies on support for informal carers. While a circular of guidance for local authorities will be among the methods of making use of that experience we shall wish to consider it is not possible to determine this at present.

Elderly People (Hammersmith and Fulham)

34. **Mr. Soley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the manner in which Hammersmith and Fulham council is discharging its statutory duties to provide residential care places for the elderly.

Mr. Whitney: I understand that an issue related to the provision of residential care for elderly people by Hammersmith and Fulham council is shortly to come before the High Court. In the light of that, it would be inappropriate for me to comment further on the matter.

Prescriptions

35. **Mr. Fry** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest statistics for the percentage of prescriptions which are supplied free of charge.

Mr. Hayhoe: In the period January to August 1985 (the latest period for which figures are available) 212·4 million NHS prescription items were issued of which 74·4 per cent. were supplied free of charge. A further 5·4 per cent. of items were issued without charge to holders of prescription pre-payment certificates.

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received following his statement on prescription charges.

39. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representation he has received opposing further increases in prescription charges.

Mr. Hayhoe: Since my statement to the House on 10 March about 30 letters concerning the scope and level of prescription charges have been received.

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of claims for exemption from prescription charges have been found to be false over the last period for which figures are available.

Mr. Hayhoe: In October 1984 (the latest date for which figures are available) 11·5 million prescription forms had signed declarations that the patient was exempt from National Health Service prescription charges. A sample check of these declarations showed that an estimated 0·9 per cent. were incorrect.

Private Nursing Homes

37. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the maximum moneys available from his Department per week to assist elderly residents in private nursing homes.

Mr. Newton: The maximum amounts of supplementary benefit payable to people in private nursing homes are laid down in schedule 1 to the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions (No. 2) Regulation 1985 (SI 1985 No 1835).

Sunderland (Informal Carers)

38. **Mr. Clay** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has made of the number of informal carers in Sunderland.

Mr. Whitney: The Department has made no estimate of the number of people involved in providing such care.

Self-propelled Wheelchairs

40. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has yet reached a conclusion on that section of the McColl report which deals with self-propelled wheelchairs for the chronically disabled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We do not expect to reach conclusions on any part of the report before the completion of current consultations with a wide range of interests and initial work being carried out under the direction of the National Health Service Management Board. As an interim measure, and to ensure that this work is taken forward without delay, we have appointed a new general manager of disablement services who is accountable to the board for the operation of the artificial limb and wheelchair services, for collating responses to consultation, and for the detailed and urgent examination of issues raised by the report.

Housing Benefit

41. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received on the new method of assessment of housing benefit.

Mr. Newton: Over 2,000 submissions were received on the housing benefit proposals contained in the Green Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9517). A number of further representations have been made following publication of the White Paper (Cmnd. 9691) and the Social Security Bill.

57. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much he expects to save as a result of his planned changes to students' entitlement to housing benefit.

Mr. Newton: Of the proposals for change referred to the Social Security Advisory Committee and the local authority associations on 7 January which would reduce students' entitlement to benefits, those relating to housing benefit account for about 90 per cent. of the gross savings of some £40 million-£45 million. However the savings will be partly offset by the cost of compensatory changes amounting to approximately £20 million-£25 million, of which about half will be distributed through the housing benefits scheme through new income disregards.

Supplementary Benefit

42. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the numbers of people in receipt of supplementary benefit who are of working age, are not disabled and are not actively seeking work.

Mr. Major: This information is not collected by the Department.

58. **Mr. Squire** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consequences he anticipates from the abolition in the current year of a number of single payments to supplementary benefit claimants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) on 24 February 1986 at columns *476-78;* we estimate that the proposals to amend the single payments regulations, currently being consdered by the Social Security Advisory Committee, would bring back expenditure to about the 1984 level.

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many households in the London borough of Newham receive supplementary benefit; what were the numbers in each of the last six years; and what percentage of the total number of such households the latest figure represents.

Mr. Major: The London borough of Newham is covered by three of the Departments offices, Canning Town, Plaistow and Woodgrange park, but their boundaries are not conterminous.

Information about the number of households receiving supplementary benefit is not available. The following figures show the total number of people claiming supplementary benefit from those offices at 11 February 1986 and at comparable dates for the last six years. There will in some circumstances be more than one claimant in a household.

Years	*Numbers*
1980	17,113
1981	19,643
1982	23,853
1983	26,788
1984	28,127
1985	30,552
1986	31,897

This Department has no information on the total number of households in Newham.

Ambulance Service (Pay)

43. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on plans for a new national salaries structure for ambulancemen.

Mr. Whitney: A salaried structure for ambulancemen was introduced on 1 March 1986 following agreement reached in the Ambulance Whitley council.

Family Practitioner Services

45. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to publish his consultation paper on family practitioner services.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Government expect to publish the consultative document on primary health care shortly.

Wrightington Hospital (Children's Ward)

46. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the consultation procedures being adopted prior to the revised submission to him in connection with the proposed closure of the children's ward at Wrightington hospital.

Mr. Whitney: I am confident that the North-Western regional health authority has ensured full consultations, in accordance with established procedures.

Hospital for Tropical Diseases

47. **Mr. Moynihan** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received representations seeking to secure future provision for clinical tropical medicine and diagnostic parasitology at the Hospital for Tropical Diseases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Several representations have been received. Bloomsbury health authority is responsible for the management of the Hospital for Tropical Diseases. The authority has no plans to close the hospital but is considering possible relocation of the hospital within the district. The authority is at present undertaking a review of the range, scope and location of the services it must provide to best meet the future needs of patients and medical teaching and research and development. Any formal strategic proposals suggesting major changes to the Hospital for Tropical Diseases arising from this exercise would be subject to full public consultation under standard National Health Service procedures.

My hon. Friend may care to contact the health authority chairman direct for any further information.

Junior Doctors

48. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the average hours worked per week by junior doctors in the National Health Service for the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, and 1985.

Mr. Hayhoe: The following table shows the average hours of duty of junior doctors. Information is not routinely collected on the number of hours actually worked, but an independent survey commissioned by the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration indicated a weekly average, in 1981, of 55·3. A further survey has been commissioned, but the results are not yet available.

Permanent paid whole-time junior hospital doctors: average weekly contracted hours, at 30 September (England and Wales)

	Hours
1980	90·7
1981	90·1
1982	89·6
1983	88·6
1984	87·3
1985	86·5

Medical Education

49. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to increase the patient care content of medical education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Under the Medical Act 1983, the promotion, co-ordination and oversight of medical education are functions of the General Medical Council in which I have no power to intervene.

Social Security Bill

50. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has had any recent discussions with the National Association of Pension Funds with regard to the Social Security Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Ministers have not met the National Association of Pension Funds since publication of the Bill, but it keeps us fully informed of its views about the Bill in correspondence and through its contacts with the Department's officials. We shall continue to give careful consideration to all points put to us by the association.

Cadaver Organs

52. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received in support of proposals to oblige doctors to seek permission to remove kidneys and other organs from patients whenever a life support machine is switched off; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: My right hon. Friend has received two letters from members of the public supporting this proposal, and three hon. Members have forwarded similar letters from their constituents. I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) on 4 March at columns *123-24*.

NHS (Griffiths Report)

53. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will report further progress on the implementation of the Griffiths proposals on the management of the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: Implementation is progressing well. All regional and district general manager appointments have been made; and more than four fifths of the 600-plus unit general manager posts have already been filled.

Budget

54. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the effect of the Budget on his Department's functions.

Mr. Whitney: None so far.

Mental Care (Finance Schemes)

55. **Mr. Meadowdcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received on the operation of joint health and social services finance schemes for the case of the mentally handicapped and mentally ill in the community.

Mr. Whitney: Since the publication in November 1985 of the Government response to the report of the Social Services Committee on community care, representations from some 25 bodies, for the most part local branches of MENCAP, have been received about the funding of community care. Representations have also been made by the local authority associations and the National Association of Health Authorities. In addition the North-West Association of Social Services Authorities has written to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State seeking a meeting about funding of community care.

Childbirth

56. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on his Department's policy towards choice for women in methods of childbirth.

Mr. Whitney: In general mothers should be able to give birth to their baby in whatever way they choose, so long as it is compatible with safety. Health authorities must decide in the light of staff and resources available, what special facilities can and should be provided to meet mothers' preferences for care during childbirth. The Maternity Services Advisory Committee offered advice on aspects of this care in its second report, which was published in January 1984.

NHS (Patient Statistics)

59. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many in and outpatients, respectively, were treated in National Health Service hospitals during the last 12 months for which figures are available; and how these figures compare with previous years.

Mr. Whitney: In 1984, the latest year for which information is available centrally, National Health Service hospitals treated 6·2 million inpatient cases and dealt with 37 million outpatients attendances, including 8·5 million new outpatient attendances. A comparison with previous years is given by the following extract from table 1 of DHSS Statistical Bulletin 5/85, a copy of which is in the Library.

NHS Hospitals in England

Index, 1974=100

Year	*In-patient cases (discharges and deaths)*	*Out-patients*	
		New	*Total attendances*
1974	100·0	100·0	100·0
*1975	96·2	88·5	92·8
1976	101·6	95·8	97·1
1977	103·4	97·3	99·8
1978	103·8	98·6	101·8
*1979	104·4	98·6	102·2
1980	109·6	101·5	105·7
1981	111·4	102·6	106·7
*1982	110·6	103·5	106·9
1983	116·4	106·2	109·5
1984	119·4	108·7	111·1

* Industrial action in these years restricted the number of cases treated.

Student Benefits

61. **Sir William van Straubenzee** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to have received the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee on the proposed changes in student benefit entitlement.

Mr. Newton: Shortly.

Pensions

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what effect he expects the proposed 2 per cent. incentive payment to those who establish new contracted-out pension plans will have on established occupational schemes.

Mr. Newton: Apart from its main effect of encouraging the expansion of occupational and personal pension schemes, we expect the incentive payment will also encourage existing occupational pension schemes which are not contracted-out to become so. We do not expect that the payment of the incentive to personal pension holders will undermine existing occupational schemes, as has been suggested by some pensions interests.

"Reform of Social Security"

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what benefit uprating was assumed in the production of the "A" series of tables in the technical annex which accompanied the Government's White Paper "Reform of Social Security," Cmnd. 9691.

Mr. Newton: The assumptions are stated at paragraph 2.11 of the technical annex.

Disablement Benefit

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, for each quarter since January 1980 and for each Department of Health and Social Security region, how many people in receipt of disablement benefit have had their cases reviewed; and how many such reviews resulted in the payment of disablement benefit being reduced.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind, perhaps he would write to me.

Dental Service

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cost to the National Health Service of extractions of teeth carried out by the dental service for the

most recent 12 month period for which figures are available; and what was the real cost for the same period 10 years previously.

Mr. Hayhoe: The cost of extractions, other than extractions of special difficulty, carried out in the general dental service in England in 1984 was £10·4 million. The cost in 1974 was £14·6 million at 1984 prices.

Medical Care (Private Investment)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what effect he expects the tax proposals in the current Budget to have on the flow of private funds into medical care and relief; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I share the hope of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer that his proposals will have the desired effect of increasing charitable giving for these purposes, thus adding to the benefits of the VAT change which will enable charities to retain slightly more of what they already get.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the estimated cost to the Exchequer in 1986-87 of a reduction in national insurance contributions for employees of 1 per cent. of relevant earnings.

Mr. Major: On the basis of the assumptions set out in his report on the draft of the Social Security (Contributions, Re-rating) Order 1985, the Government Actuary estimates that a reduction of 1 per cent. in the primary contribution rates would produce a loss of revenue amounting to £1,290 million in 1986-87.

Visually Handicapped Children

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if all visually handicapped children who are prescribed spectacles, including those with complex lenses, will get them free after the introduction of the Government's proposed voucher system; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if all visually handicapped children who are prescribed spectacles can get them free; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: All visually handicapped and other children are at present entitled to free National Health Service spectacles either under the general ophthalmic services or the hospital eye service. Under the proposed voucher system they will receive vouchers to permit their spectacles to be obtained from the much wider choice available on the private market.

Whooping Cough Vaccine

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many children have received the whooping cough vaccine since it was introduced by the National Health Service;

(2) how many children were recorded as completing primary courses of vaccination against whooping cough *(a)* between 1958 and 1982, *(b)* in 1983, *(c)* in 1984 and *(d)* in 1985.

Mr. Whitney: Whooping cough vaccination was first recommended as part of the childhood immunisation programme in 1957, and central collection of statistics of the number of children vaccinated against whooping cough started in 1958. The available information is given in the table.

Children completing primary courses of vaccination against whooping cough

England and Wales

Years	*Thousands*
1958-82	12,514
1983	425
1984	410
*1958-84	13,348

* The total does not equal the sum of the parts due to rounding.

Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many awards have been made under the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979; and what was *(a)* the highest payment, *(b)* the lowest payment and *(c)* the average payment.

Mr. Whitney: Up to 25 February, the latest date for which information is available, 822 awards of a vaccine damage payment have been made. Payment was £10,000 on successful claims made before 18 June 1985 and £20,000 on claims made on or after that date.

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further payments he proposes making under the terms of the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979 to *(a)* whooping cough vaccine damaged children and *(b)* other victims of vaccine damage.

Mr. Whitney: We have no plans to make any further changes to the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979 following the doubling of the payment to £20,000 last year.

Subacute Sclerosis Parencephalitis

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what study his Department has made, or commissioned, of the cause, incidence and treatment of subacute sclerosing parencephalitis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The Department has not commissioned a specific study in this field. However, I understand that the public health laboratory service communicable disease surveillance centre, London, is continuing surveillance of the number of cases arising. I am told that the association with the measles virus is established and vaccination against measles is the only known method of reducing the incidence of the disease.

Diet

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards the health aspects of diet in the light of the British Medical Association report "Diet, Nutrition and Health," a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Whitney: The Government are committed to promoting healthy eating and look to the Chief Medical Officer's Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy

for advice on diet and health. COMA takes into account all relevant medical and scientific reports and publications.

Crown Copyright

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why he has arranged for the footnote © crown copyright to appear on certain recent circulars from his Department; and whether this illustrates a general change of policy.

Mr. Major: This inclusion of the © Crown copyright legend on circulars issued by the Department of Health and Social Security follows recent correspondence from HMSO which acted as a reminder that all material published by Government is Crown copyright.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many district health authorities have, within their district, more than one general hospital;

(2) how many district health authorities serve two or more metropolitan district councils within their geographical area.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) on 24 March.

Accident and Emergency Departments

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hospitals have accident and emergency departments without the back-up of an intensive care unit on the same site.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks in precisely the form requested. I shall let the hon. Member have the available relevant information as soon as possible.

Community Care

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with progress in the co-ordination of services for the mentally handicapped between local authorities and district health authorities in the light of the policy for care in the community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: We are encouraged by the knowledge that throughout the country many innovative schemes for community care are being initiated, involving extensive co-operation between local authorities and health authorities. A joint working group on joint planning, comprising officials of the local authority associations, the National Association of Health Authorities and the Department, has now reported and has made many positive proposals for promoting joint planning. The Department has issued for consultation a draft guidance circular drawing upon the working group's report. In scrutinising plans, we look for evidence of consultation and collaboration between authorities at all levels.

Purchasing Policy

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied that the industry support aims of the Government's public purchasing policy are adequately taken into account by health authorities; and whether the National Health Service will be represented at the "Better Made in Britain" exhibition.

Mr. Whitney: National Health Service authorities are generally sensitive in their purchasing decisions to the aims of the public purchasing policy initiated by the Government in 1981 to use purchasing power to strengthen suppliers' competitiveness.

Nevertheless my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I believe the scope for improvements should be reviewed. Accordingly he has asked me, with the help of a small group of regional health authority chairmen and officials, to consider what further action might usefully be taken to help support the development and maintenance of a strong, internationally competitive health care industry. The group has commenced its review. It is aware of the study being undertaken by an advisory council for applied research and development working party into the international competitiveness of the United Kingdom medical equipment industry and looks forward to the working party's report. NHS authorities spend nearly £2 billion annually on a wide variety of supplies; it is important for the service, for our economy, and for employment opportunities, that British industry is able to compete effectively over as broad a range of these supplies as possible.

In response to an invitation the NHS and the Department's Procurement Directorate will be contributing to the "Better Made in Britain" exhibition on 25 and 26 March. We plan to follow this up later in the year with the launch of a "Design" competition for a number of products bought by the National Health Service. Good design and high quality, as well as keen prices, are key factors in successful competition.

Social Security Reform

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables similar to tables 8A, 8B, 17A and 17B in the technical annex to Cmnd. 9691 showing the average change in disposable income by family status under the proposals in the Social Security Bill.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 March 1986, c. *157-58*]: The information requested is shown in the tables.

The average gain across all groups in Table 1 (£2·20) differs from the figure shown in Table 8A of the technical annex (shown as £2·10) owing to a printing error in the technical annex.

Table 1

All income-related benefits: average change in disposable income after meeting housing costs: by family status
Cash position at point of change

Family Status	*Income Support* £ *pw*	*Others* £ *pw*	*All* £ *pw*
Pensioners			
Single	+1·80	+1·70	+1·80
Couples	+2·40	+1·80	+2·00
Non-pensioners with children			
Lone Parents	+4·60	+3·10	+4·20
Couples	+5·60	+5·70	+5·60
Non-pensioners without children			

Family Status	Income Support £ pw	Others £ pw	All £ pw
Single age 25+	+2·30	−0·50	+1·40
Single age under 25	+0·70	−2·50	+0·30
Couples	+1·50	−0·70	+0·40
All	+2·40	+2·00	+2·20

Note: Without 20 per cent. rates contribution.

Table 2
All income-related benefits: average change in disposable income after meeting housing costs: by family status
Effect of structural reform

Family Status	Income Support £ pw	Others £ pw	All £ pw
Pensioners			
Single	+0·30	+0·50	+0·40
Couples	−0·10	+0·10	0·00
Non-pensioners with children			
Lone Parents	+2·80	+1·10	+2·30
Couples	+3·00	+3·60	+3·30
Non-pensioners without children			
Single age 25+	+0·80	−1·10	+0·20
Single age under 25	−1·50	−2·60	−1·60
Couples	−1·10	−1·40	−1·30
All	+0·60	+0·60	+0·60

Note: Without 20 per cent. rates contribution.

Table 3
All Income-related Benefits: Average Change in Disposable Income after Meeting Housing Costs: by Family Status
Cash position at point of change

Family Status	Income Support £ pw	Others £ pw	All £ pw
Pensioners			
Single	+1·00	+0·60	+0·80
Couples	+1·30	+0·70	+0·90
Non-pensioners with children			
Lone Parents	+3·60	+2·40	+3·20
Couples	+4·50	+5·20	+4·90
Non-pensioners without children			
Single age 25+	+1·90	−1·40	+0·90
Single age under 25	+0·70	−3·10	+0·20
Couples	+0·50	−1·70	−0·60
All	+1·70	+1·00	+1·40

Note: With 20 per cent. rates contribution but taking no account of the effects of rates reform.

Table 4
All Income-related Benefits: Average Change in Disposable Income after Meeting Housing Costs: by Family Status
Effect of structural reform

Family Status	Income Support £ pw	Others £ pw	All £ pw
Pensioners			
Single	−0·50	−0·60	−0·60
Couples	−1·10	−1·00	−1·00
Non-pensioners with children			
Lone Parents	+1·80	+0·30	+1·40
Couples	+2·00	+3·10	+2·50
Non-pensioners without children			
Single age 25+	+0·40	−2·10	−0·40
Single age under 25	−1·50	−3·20	−1·70
Couples	−2·00	−2·30	−2·20
All	−0·10	−0·40	−0·30

Note: With 20 per cent. rates contribution but taking no account of the effects of rates reform.

Cold Weather (Deaths)

51. **Mr. Terry Davis** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the numbers of people who died as a result of the cold weather in January and February.

Mr. Whitney: It is not possible to make an accurate assessment of the number of deaths due solely or primarily to this period of cold weather. I am, however, studying the results of the study of hypothermia statistics which I announced in my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 19 December 1985 at column *321*.

DEFENCE

Brigade of Guards (Ethnic Make-up)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the Brigade of Guards are black; and what steps his Department is taking to increase recruitment from ethnic minorities.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not held. The armed forces operate a policy of non-discrimination and integration in employment. Recruitment into the armed forces is by merit alone.

British Nuclear Tests

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the study which is being carried out by the National Radiological Protection Board on the health of British nuclear test participants.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The study on the health of British nuclear test participants is making progress, but it has proved to be more difficult than was expected when the National Radiological Protection Board issued its protocol in 1983. I am now advised that the results cannot be expected until spring next year. There are a number of reasons for the delay.

The first reason is that the study includes a much higher proportion of participants, about 20,000, rather than the 12,000 of whom details were available at the outset. This increase has required a corresponding increase in the size of the control group. The NRPB holds firmly to the view that this improves the study's validity and epidemiological acceptability enormously. NRPB, of course, has to be satisfied that it can fully justify the inclusion of each person.

Secondly, the operation of searching service records, which were not designed for the purpose of identifying all

individuals present at or near the test locations between certain precisely defined dates, has proved to be much more time consuming than was expected.

Thirdly, and most important, the various field records identifying participants often only include a surname. Very considerable search of service records is therefore needed to identify the individual, confirm his participation and obtain the details needed to find him in the National Health Service central register. Even now some 2,000 names are still being investigated.

I am satisfied that these difficulties have been tackled vigorously and extra resources have been applied to try and maintain the momentum of the study. The study will be a better one as a result, but I am afraid that it will take longer to complete.

Radar Systems (Research)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Defence what research and development is currently being carried out in his Department on the Blue Yeoman radar system; and what research and development is currently being carried out in his Department on the RABIES radar system.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Blue Yeoman radar is an experimental facility at Royal Signals and Radar Establishment at Malvern, which has undergone a major improvement programme over the last two years. It is being used to carry out research into a number of topics relating to advanced radar techniques and systems which will be applicable to future long-range air defence.

The RABIES equipment is being used in conjunction with the Blue Yeoman radar for research into bistatic radar, where the transmitter and receiver are some distance apart. A successful start has recently been made to a trials programme involving aircraft targets.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence why it is necessary for the United Kingdom embassy in Washington to employ American standards and procedures in vetting the security clearance of those United Kingdom nationals who have been invited to attend the strategic defence initiative office seminar on 25 March.

Mr. Norman Lamont: United Kingdom nationals who are to receive classified United States information, and United States nationals who are to receive United Kingdom classified information are cleared to do so under parallel and reciprocal security procedures agreed between the United States and United Kingdom Governments.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence why United Kingdom nationals must agree to sign an undertaking that they will refrain from discussing any information which they collect from the strategic defence initiative office seminar on 25 March.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is normal to make suitable arrangements for the protection of classified information. That said, I am not aware that any requirement for such a written undertaking exists for this symposium but if, in the event, it does, United States nationals present will also be required to comply.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 26 March 1986

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Council of Agriculture Ministers

Mr. Maclennan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the outcome of the Council of Agriculture Ministers' meeting on 24 and 25 March.

Mr. Jopling: At the meeting of the Agriculture Council on 24-25 March I represented the United Kingdom together with my right hon. Friend the Minister of State.

The Council had an extensive discussion of the Commission's proposals for agricultural prices and related measures. I continued to press the case for a tough price policy as a central element in the arrangements to be adopted together with non-discriminatory measures to secure the changes needed in the CAP. The Council will resume its discussion of these proposals when it next meets on 21 April. Meanwhile, the Council agreed to extend the marketing years for beef and milk together with the beef variable premium, calf subsidy and arrangemens for dried fodder until 27 April. The suspension of inward processing in the milk sector was also extended to the same date.

In order to help finance the disposal of intervention stocks the Council agreed to amend the rules providing for the depreciation of intervention stocks and the Commission undertook to make under its powers adjustments to the arrangements for financing of intervention to achieve economies to the extent possible within its own powers.

The Council adopted a directive providing for the welfare standards for hens kept in battery cages. The United Kingdom voted against the measure. As a measure concerning the approximation of national laws we considered that the legal base should have included article 100. The measure provides for a minimum space allowance of 450 sq cm per bird to apply for new cages from two years after its adoption and for existing cages after nine years. I made it clear that, while this was the best measure which was negotiable at the present time, it did not go far enougn to protect the welfare of hens in battery cages and that the results of further studies should be presented for discussion along with proposals for action, if possible before the formal review dates in the directive. I am pleased to say that I was fully supported in seeking further improvements by Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands.

The Council agreed a revised mandate for negotiations with the ACP states on the 1985-86 raw sugar price. It involves a slightly improved offer to the ACP states, while taking account of the interests of Community refiners.

Seabirds (South Shields)

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) why his wildlife incident unit, having collected on 10 March seabirds found dead for no apparent reason on the seashore at South Shields, informed the hon. Member for South Shields on 12 March that autopsies were not possible on account of the delay since their collection;

(2) why his wildlife incident unit, having collected seabirds, which were found dead for no apparent reason, on the seashore of South Shields, refused to perform autopsies;

(3) why the seabirds found dead for no apparent reason on 8 March on the shore at South Shields and collected by his Department's wildlife incident unit on 10 March, were not autopsied at the Lasswade Laboratories.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1986]: In accordance with normal procedures an autopsy was carried out at the Veterinary Investigation Centre, Longbenton, Newcastle upon Tyne on the sea birds found dead on the sea shore at South Shields. From the visual inspection there was nothing to indicate the cause of death. No useful bacteriological or biochemical examination was possible because of post-mortem changes in the internal organs.

Wildlife Incident Unit

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what instructions he has issued to his wildlife incident unit changing its remit, since this was announced by his hon. Friend the Member for Medway (Mrs. Fenner) during the passage of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 25 March 1986]: The remit of the wildlife incident investigation scheme has not changed. Agricultural development and advisory officers will continue to operate the scheme to provide post-registration surveillance of problems arising from the use of agricultural pesticides.

Wheat

Mr. Chope asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to which countries Britain exported wheat in the last five financial years; and what was the total quantity and value per country in each year.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March 1986, c. *345*]: The detail requested is not readily available on a financial basis. Data on a calendar year basis are as follows:

United Kingdom Exports of Wheat—1981 to 1985

	1981		*1982*		*1983*		*1984*		*1985*	
	Tonnes	*£'000*	*Tonnes*	*£'000*	*Tonnes*	*£'000*	*Tonnes*	*£'000*	*Tonnes*	*£'000*
France	191,270	21,019	503,445	57,444	145,017	17,665	81,314	9,667	572	137
Belgium/Luxembourg	63,998	6,789	117,852	13,456	80,368	9,898	81,249	9,432	88,557	10,172
Netherlands	124,148	13,087	115,601	13,159	148,682	17,707	94,662	11,337	183,955	20,607

	1981		1982		1983		1984		1985	
	Tonnes	£'000	Tonnes	£'000	Tonnes	£'000	Tonnes	£'000	Tonnes	£'000
West Germany	110,616	12,141	236,776	27,399	120,242	14,685	346,908	41,639	738,530	83,411
Italy	14	3	68,470	7,845	24,591	3,155	162,526	18,411	130,718	14,153
Irish Republic	237,070	29,157	122,428	16,989	96,139	14,353	158,741	23,031	106,306	15,614
Denmark	1	0	16,809	1,939	33,011	4,274	15,744	2,646	122,184	14,201
Greece	—	—	1,219	137	35	4	—	—	—	—
Iceland	34	4	—	—	20	15	—	—	1	0
Norway	5,981	643	57,457	6,569	26,873	3,419	12,953	1,456	—	—
Sweden	2,150	207	—	—	1,082	141	25	8	14	3
Finland	71,125	7,404	14,780	1,768	—	—	—	—	—	—
Switzerland	—	—	24	3	—	—	—	—	—	—
Malta	2,025	226	15,434	1,618	5,189	703	—	—	—	—
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	74,125	8,270	19,855	2,336	2,384	285	282,068	31,841	42,195	4,813
East Germany	183,778	19,291	70,771	7,976	101,483	13,458	262,385	29,096	13,735	1,616
Poland	129,472	14,058	133,287	15,909	139,588	17,705	237,044	27,211	115,524	12,570
Romania	262,698	29,853	80,210	9,624	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bulgaria	—	—	3,549	429	—	—	—	—	—	—
Morocco	10,999	1,287	74,340	8,909	53,038	6,051	—	—	—	—
Algeria	—	—	123,281	14,312	107,404	12,290	103,131	12,764	128,202	14,256
Tunisia	21,800	2,418	—	—	84,593	11,108	9,963	1,274	18,232	2,106
Egypt	1,171	128	25,639	3,015	116,339	14,572	24,999	3,300	—	—
Nigeria	277	31	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cape Verde	—	—	5,249	622	—	—	—	—	—	—
Guinea	—	—	4,000	472	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ethiopia	—	—	36,900	4,582	—	—	46,696	5,219	98,975	11,353
Kenya	—	—	19,992	2,394	—	—	49,178	6,232	—	—
Jordan	—	—	600	94	—	—	—	—	—	—
Saudi-Arabia	—	—	3,501	407	2,287	257	—	—	—	—
Iran	2,813	301	2,077	247	25,260	3,159	—	—	—	—
Pakistan	—	—	24,696	2,867	—	—	58,944	7,639	—	—
Bangladesh	—	—	75,105	9,056	29,910	3,650	30,130	3,849	26,025	3,805
China	11,286	1,302	44,370	5,307	25,845	3,091	—	—	—	—
North Korea	—	—	4,656	529	—	—	—	—	—	—
New Zealand	8	2	37	10	3	0	—	—	—	—
Honduras	3,998	496	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Venezuela	24	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
New Caledonia	—	—	329	38	—	—	—	—	—	—
Barbados	—	—	3,255	389	—	—	—	—	—	—
Belize	—	—	2,754	318	—	—	3,400	445	—	—
Cuba	—	—	325,736	39,883	—	—	112,037	12,709	—	—
Falkland Islands	—	—	5	1	12	2	26	5	13	3
Spain	—	—	—	—	5,673	736	—	—	—	—
Mali	—	—	—	—	2,450	345	—	—	—	—
Angola	—	—	—	—	8,997	985	—	—	—	—
Cyprus	—	—	—	—	12,641	1,605	—	—	—	—
Thailand	—	—	—	—	1,100	154	—	—	—	—
Australia	—	—	—	—	7	2	—	—	—	—
Chad	—	—	—	—	—	—	8,799	957	2,016	292
Lebanon	—	—	—	—	—	—	24,320	3,261	—	—
Sudan	—	—	—	—	—	—	3,619	424	30,641	3,766
Turkey	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	39,798	4,863
Mauritania	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	246	36
Philippines	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3,600	397
Rwanda	—	—	—	—	—	—	4,499	655	—	—
Dominica	—	—	—	—	—	—	23	5	—	—
Other Countries	—	—	—	—	—	—	11	3	1	1
TOTAL	1,510,881	168,121	2,354,489	278,051	1,400,263	175,475	2,215,394	264,516	1,890,040	218,174

0 = less than half the unit shown

Intervention Board (Headquarters)

Mr. Alton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider relocating the United Kingdom headquarters of the European Economic Community intervention board to Liverpool.

Mr. Jopling: I would refer the hon. Member to my reply on 24 March 1986 to my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester), at column 345.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Departmental Suppliers

Mr. Ottaway asked the Attorney-General what is the average time it takes his Department to pay suppliers of goods and services to his Department.

The Attorney-General: The Treasury Solicitor, who is responsible for funding the Law Officers' Department, has calculated that in a sample of four separate weekly periods in 1985-86 the time lapse between receipt of a bill and payment was 29·6 days.

Crown Prosecutors

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the extent and basis of his involvement in the preparation of the code for Crown prosecutors to be issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions yesterday submitted a draft code for my consideration. By virtue of section 3(1) of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 the Director discharges all his statutory responsibilities, including the duty imposed by section 10 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985, under my superintendence.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime Statistics

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of *(a)* sex offences, *(b)* burglary, *(c)* theft and *(d)* criminal damage in the London borough of Wandsworth in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the figures for recorded offences in Wandsworth in 1981 and 1982 are as given in the following table. Figures for subsequent years have been placed in the Library in accordance with the undertaking given to the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) on 8 May 1985, at columns 410-11.

Offences recorded by the police in the borough of Wandsworth (Police District "W")

Number

	1981	*1982*
Sexual offences	144	150
Burglary	6,161	7,016
Theft and handling stolen goods	14,197	15,588
Criminal damage	4,077	4,399

Prisoners

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the report of the Chief Inspector of Prisons on the preparation of prisoners for release will be published.

Mr. Mellor: The report and my right hon. Friend's response to it will be published when it has been fully studied.

Attendance Centres

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the extent of the expansion of *(a)* senior attendance centres and *(b)* junior attendance centres since 1979.

Mr. Mellor: Since May 1979, 17 new senior centres and 34 junior centres have been opened. These include two junior centres which have been created by dividing existing centres.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many senior and junior attendance centres are available to males, females and both sexes respectively.

Mr. Mellor: There are 130 attendance centres in England and Wales: 19 senior centres for males aged 17-20 years; 91 junior boys' centres (10 to 16 years); seven junior girls' centres and 13 junior mixed centres.

Traffic Wardens

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why, in view of the level of unemployment in London, the Metropolitan police are advertising directly for traffic wardens; and what use is being made of jobcentres for this purpose.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner informs me that direct recruitment advertising for traffic wardens is generally the most cost-effective method of attracting suitable applicants, but the Metropolitan police also advertise through jobcentres in areas where there are particular shortages of traffic wardens.

Prison Rules

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when the report of the Chief Inspector of Prisons on rule 43 was submitted to him by the Chief Inspector of Prisons;

(2) when the report of the Chief Inspector of Prisons on rule 43 will be published.

Mr. Mellor: We shall shortly be publishing the report, which was submitted on 6 August 1985.

Prisons (Suicides Report)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the report of the working group on suicide and prisons.

Mr. Mellor: We intend to publish the conclusions of the working group which was set up to examine the issues raised by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prison's report, "Suicide in Prison". We will consider whether it would be useful to publish the report in full.

Police (Traffic Duties)

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the total number of police employed on traffic duties in 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985 in *(a)* the south-east, *(b)* the east midlands and *(c)* the west midlands.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The following estimated numbers of police officers were allocated to specialised traffic divisions in these regions from 1982 to 1985. Comparable information for 1981 is not readily available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Allocation of police officers to traffic divisions on 31 December

Region (Police Forces)	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
SOUTH EAST (Bedfordshire, Essex, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Thames Valley, Metropolitan Police)	2,941	2,871	3,113	2,676
EAST MIDLANDS (Cambridgeshire, Derbyshire, Leicester, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Suffolk)	1,262	1,153	1,103	992
WEST MIDLANDS (Cheshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Mercia, West Midlands)	1,246	1,256	1,175	1,267

Fire Precautions Act

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, further to the hon. Member for Westminster, North's question of 22 January, *Official Report*, column *216*, he can report progress on the consultation exercise on the review of the Fire Precautions Act and the designation of further classes of premises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Home Secretary will be reporting the outcome of the consultative exercise in a further document to be published later in the spring. Pending the outcome of the review no designation of new classes of premises under fire precautions legislation is contemplated.

Handicapped People

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many mentally handicapped people were admitted to prison, remand centres or custodial care in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Mellor: Information is not held centrally as to the number of prisoners received into custody who could be deemed mentally handicapped. However, the following table shows the number of inmates in prison custody in England and Wales on the dates shown whose disorder, in the opinion of the Medical Officer, was of a nature or degree which would make it appropriate for them to be detained in hospital under the terms of the Mental Health Act 1983.

Date	*Number*
30 September 1981	327
31 March 1982	287
30 September 1982	286
31 March 1983	319
30 September 1983	316
31 March 1984	310
30 September 1984	283
31 March 1985	269
30 September 1985	251

Marriage Guidance Council

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the increase in the work load of the National Marriage Guidance Council since 1980 and the increase in grant to the council since 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Home Office grant to the National Marriage Guidance Council is given to support the council in its work of selecting and training lay counsellors. Between 1980-81 and 1984-85 (the latest year for which information is available), the numbers of counsellors selected and trained increased by 57 per cent. and 55 per cent. respectively, and the number of training courses provided by 38 per cent. In the same period the Home Office grant increased by 49 per cent. My right hon. Friend is considering the longer-term level of the Home Office grants to marriage guidance bodies, including that to the council.

West Midlands Police

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands police as to the number of officers in his constabulary who are under the age of 25 years; and what this number represents as a percentage of the total West Midlands police manpower.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable that on 31 December 1985, 943 police officers in the West Midlands police were under 25 years of age, representing 14·4 per cent. of the strength of the force of 6,555 on that date.

Mrs Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands police as to the areas of duties undertaken by his officers which permit flexibility of hours and in which uniforms are not worn and the numbers of requests which have been submitted during the last 12 months for transfers by police officers doing street duties.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable of the West Midlands police that there is a range of duties undertaken by police officers in the force which permit flexibility of hours and in which uniforms are not worn. Most of these duties are in the criminal investigation department, and there are others in such areas of scenes of crime, warrants, community services, firearms training, coroners' officers, complaints and discipline, and in the regional crime squad.

I understand that requests are regularly received from uniformed officers in the force for transfer to attachment to specialist departments, mainly in the interests of gaining further experience or career development. Precise figures are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Immigration

Mrs Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors from the Indian sub-continent have arrived in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years; what proportion of them were refused leave to enter; and how many immigration personnel have been employed to administer these entries each year during the same period.

Mr. Waddington: The number of visitors admitted and the total number of passengers refused entry in 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984 have been published by nationality in table 1 of the annual publication "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom" (Cmnd. 8533, 8944, 9246 and 9544 respectively). That statistics on refusals do not distinguish passengers seeking entry as visitors. Figures for the whole of 1985 are not yet available, but during the first six months of the year 188,000 nationals of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan were admitted, 120,000 of whom were visitors. In the same period 1,770 were removed after having been refused entry.

Individual immigration officers at ports of entry interview a wide range of passengers of various nationalities. It is consequently not possible to estimate the time taken up by the nationals of particular countries.

Irradiated Food

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of prosecutions in each of the last five years for selling irradiated food for human consumption; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not recorded centrally. The information available to me relates to all proceedings for offences of adulteration of food and public health offences, most of which is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" under offence classifications 89 and 101, and 91 respectively in table S1.1(A), volume 1—magistrates' courts.

Neighbourhood Watch, London

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Metropolitan police have yet received the report on neighbourhood watch in London commissioned from the Policy Studies Institute; and if copies of this report will be made available to hon. Members.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Metropolitan police have not commissioned a report on neighbourhood watch in London from the Policy Studies Institute. The Directorate of Management Services of the Metropolitan police and the Institute of Criminology, Cambridge are, however, carrying out an evaluation of neighbourhood watch in London, the results of which are expected to become available towards the end of this year. I shall ensure that any lessons to be learnt from this work are drawn to the attention of those involved in the organisation of neighbourhood watch schemes.

Police (Stop and Search)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were stopped and searched on each month since January 1984 and subsequently *(a)* charged and *(b)* not charged for each of the sub-divisions of "N" division of the Metropolitan Police area.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 March 1986, c. *10*]: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the readily available information is as given in the table. The table shows for 1984 the number of persons or vehicles recorded as stopped; statistics showing the number of occasions on which a search was conducted are not available. Up to 1 April 1985 the information was collated on an annual basis and figures for the first quarter of 1985 could be provided only at disproportionate cost. From 1 April 1985 the Metropolitan police introduced a new code of practice relating to stop and search procedures and the information collected, in line with section 5 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, relates only to those occasions on which persons or vehicles were searched and is collated on a divisional basis only. These figures are therefore not comparable with those for 1984. Monthly figures for such small areas are very variable and have therefore been aggregated to provide quarterly totals. Information on whether charges resulted from the arrests shown is not available.

Stops and resultant arrests: 'N' District, Metropolitan Police*

Number

	Police Station				
	Kings Cross Road	*Islington*	*Holloway*	*Highbury Vale*	*'N' District Total*
1984					
†Stops of persons or vehicles	3,300	3,800	8,200	2,600	17,900
†Arrests resulting from stops	600	600	1,900	100	3,300

* The basis of recording changed on 1 April 1985.

† The figures are rounded because they are based on information in station registers for operational purposes and as this form of recording is unsuitable for the preparation of statistical summaries the resultant figures may be subject to some error. Components may not add to the total because they have been rounded independently.

Searches and resultant arrests: 'N' District, Metropolitan Police*

Number

	Kings Cross Division (includes Islington)	*Holloway Division (includes Highbury Vale)*	*'N' District Total*
Searches			
2nd Quarter 1985	137	272	409
3rd Quarter 1985	77	199	276
4th Quarter 1985	69	127	196
Arrests resulting from searches			
2nd Quarter 1985	24	69	93
3rd Quarter 1985	9	36	45
4th Quarter 1985	11	14	25

* The basis of recording changed on 1 April 1985

† The figures are rounded because they are based on information in station registers for operational purposes and as this form of recording is unsuitable for the preparation of statistical summaries the resultant figures may be subject to some error. Components may not add to the total because they have been rounded independently.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Departmental Suppliers (Payment)

Mr. Ottaway asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the average time it takes his Department to pay suppliers of goods and services to his Department.

Mr. Butcher: The information is not readily available for the Department as a whole.

BT (Privatisation)

Mr. Golding asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total cost of selling British Telecommunications plc, the actual receipts from the sale, the number of shares issued, and the price at which such shares were sold.

Mr. Butcher: 3,012 million shares in British Telecommunications plc were offered for sale at a price of £1·30 each. Following the final instalment due on 9 April 1986 gross receipts from the sale of shares are expected to amount to £3,855 million. This takes account of the employee share offers and other selling concessions.

Expenditure to date and provisions for future expenditure show the costs of the sale as £139 million for general expenses and £37·1 million for the voucher offer.

Newspaper Industry (Grants)

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what Government grants in 1985 and 1986 have been given to the newspaper industry in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the rest of the United Kingdom, for the installation of high technology equipment.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Beer (Weights and Measures Act 1979)

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the implications of the Brewers Society guidance notes on the dispense of draught beer by free flow and hand pumps for his decison on the possible bringing into force of section 19 of the Weights and Measures Act 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I understand that the guidance notes which are being prepared by the Brewers' Society will seek to promote the use of glasses which can more readily acommodate local preferences for the way in which beer is dispensed. To facilitate the manufacture of such glasses the Department is currently reviewing the regulations dealing with the construction and testing of beer measures.

The Government will wish to see if this joint initiative proves to be satisfactory before considering implementing section 43 of the Weights and Measures Act 1985 (formerly section 19 of the 1979 Act.)

Estate Agents Act 1979

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans to review the operation of the Estate Agents Act 1979 in the light of his decision in the case involving Burling Morrison.

Mr. Howard: I have no plans to do so.

Allied Lyons (Takeover)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to be in a position to take a decision on the takeover bid of Allied Lyons by Elders XL Ltd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. and learned Friend the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced the reference of this merger proposal to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on 6 December 1985. The commission is due to submit its report on 5 June 1986.

As I am sure my hon. Friend appreciates, it would not be appropriate for Ministers to make a statement while the commission's investigation is in progress.

Mirror Group Newspapers

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to institute an inquiry under section 442 of the Companies Act 1985 into the ownership of Mirror Group Newspapers, and its relationship to a foreign trust; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: No.

Radio Regulation (Consultative Bodies)

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has yet completed the review of consultative bodies on radio regulatory matters.

Mr. Pattie: Reviews have now been carried out of the consultative arrangements applying in the fields of mobile radio and microwave fixed links.

For mobile radio I have decided that a new committee should be established with a broad base of representation, including members of associations representing manufacturers of equipment, operators of commercial radio systems and the user community. A small number of people may also be invited to attend in a personal capacity. This committee, to be called the Civil Land Mobile Radio Committee, will be able to examine and advise on strategic issues that affect the Department's regulatory policies. The committee will meet about three times a year.

A review of the membership of the Microwave Fixed Links Committee has also been concluded. This has enabled improvements to be made to the effective functioning of this committee by rationalising its membership without narrowing the spread of representation.

Unipart

Mr. Jackson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, in the light of his statement to the House of 25 March, about BL, he will indicate whether it remains the Government's intention to privatise Unipart; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: I told the House on 6 February that it was the Government's intention, with the agreement of the BL board, that negotiations should be pursued for the separate privatisation of Unipart by the early placement of shares with United Kingdom institutions. Discussions for this purpose are continuing.

Construction Industry

Mr. Nelson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the report of the Director General of Fair Trading on the professions serving the construction industry.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) announced on 23 July 1985 that the Director General of Fair Trading would be conducting a programme of reviews of restrictions in the professions. I have now received a report by the director general on advertising and charging rules in the professions serving the construction industry, which is being published today, and have placed copies in the Library of the House. While finding that there is at present a considerable degree of competition in the market for these professional services, the director general makes certain recommendations intended to increase the scope for competition further. I welcome these recommendations, and have asked the director general to discuss with the bodies concerned how they intend to implement them.

British Steel Corporation

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the future funding of the British Steel Corporation.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Since 1978 the British Steel Corporation has been funded by subscriptions of capital under section 18 of the Iron and Steel Acts of 1975 and 1982. The Government have decided that it would be appropriate in the light of the encouraging results BSC has recorded recently and in the knowledge that the European Commission has accepted BSC's restructuring plan as demonstrating that the corporation is on the path to sustained viability, to allow the BSC once more to resume medium and long-term borrowing from the national loans fund.

Distillers (Guinness Bid)

Mr. Fletcher asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, in view of the decision not to refer the second Guinness bid for Distillers to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and the opportunity this opens for bidding companies to negotiate with the Office of Fair Trading the divestment of parts of their business or make other arrangements to avoid a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, he will make a statement about the implications of this decision on competition policy and the future conduct of the competition authorities in dealing with mergers.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1986]: It is not the practice of the director general or Ministers to negotiate over references. But the Office of Fair Trading is always willing to discuss at an early stage any proposals which companies may have in mind, and to offer guidance as to whether they would be likely to be referred.

The decision not to refer the second Guinness proposal was entirely consistent with our policy of making references primarily on grounds of competition.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Solicitors (Scotland) Act

49. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland on how many occasions his Department has been involved in prosecutions arising from breaches of the provisions of the Solicitors (Scotland) Act.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: There have been two such prosecutions since 1980.

Ice Cream Salesmen

50. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what instructions have been given to the procurator fiscal in Glasgow for investigation and prosecution following on recent allegations of a renewal of violent disputes between ice cream salesmen.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: While I am aware of the recent allegations to which my hon. Friend refers, it would be inappropriate to reveal what instructions, if any, have been given in any individual current case.

Solicitor-General (Prosecutions)

51. **Mr. Fairbairn** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how often he has prosecuted a case in the High Court in Glasgow, the sheriff court in Paisley and the sheriff court in Stirling since his appointment.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I have not prosecuted in either Paisley or Stirling sheriff courts. I have, however, made a number of appearances in the High Court in Glasgow, prosecuting several cases taking up to a total of 37 days.

Medical Accidents

52. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will refer to the Scottish Law Commission for its consideration the state of the law as it relates to no-fault procedures for medical accidents, and the extent to which the experience of other countries in this area may be relevant.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate, and I recently met the hon. Members for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) and for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), when they expressed their concern about the law, in Scotland, on the liability to make reparation for medical accidents. I am not aware of any evidence that the law in Scotland on medical accidents is in need of review by the Scottish Law Commission. Consideration of a no-fault scheme to cover such accidents would be for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Salmon

53. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what communications the Crown Office has had with procurators fiscal about prosecution policy for alleged offences connected with salmon and salmon rivers.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Circulars are issued to the Procurator Fiscal Service from time to time. There is, however, no special policy, since the criteria applied to these cases are applied in all criminal prosecutions.

Rape

Mr. Pollock asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland whether he has any plans to seek to amend the law of evidence applicable to prosecutions for rape; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I have no plans for further change at this time. The Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill of last year introduced far-reaching changes to the law of evidence in sexual offence trials. The Bill is now on the statute book and section 36, brought into force on 1 January 1986, implements the recommendations of the Scottish Law Commission that complainers in sexual offence trials should be protected as far as possible from certain types of questioning and evidence.

ENERGY

British National Oil Corporation

Mr. Portillo asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has yet specified the date on which the British National Oil Corporation will be dissolved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: BNOC's final report and accounts for the 11 months ended 30 November 1985 were published earlier today, and I have placed copies in the House Libraries.

After consulting both BNOC and the Oil and Pipelines Agency in accordance with section 3(5) of the Oil and Pipelines Act 1985, I am satisfied that publication of the report and accounts completes the duties laid upon the corporation under schedule 2 to that Act. Accordingly I have made today the British National Oil Corporation (Dissolution) Order 1986 (S.I. No. 585), which specifies that the corporation will be dissolved with effect from tomorrow, 27 March. The order also has the effect of bringing into force part II of schedule 4 to the Oil and Pipelines Act 1985, which repeals a number of statutory provisions which have become unnecessary as a result of the corporation's dissolution.

On behalf of the Government, I would like to thank all those who served the corporation over the 10 years of its existence.

Oil Prices

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Energy what estimates he has made of future trends in oil prices.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Oil prices will be determined by the balance of supply and demand.

Petrol Prices

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has to monitor the pump price of petrol in the light of the Budget statement of 18 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department continues to keep in close touch with the oil companies about petrol and other oil product prices.

Waste (Fuel Conversion)

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Energy what funds he has made available, and to which local authorities, for the conversion of domestic and industrial waste into fuel.

Mr. David Hunt: Grant assistance of £3·75 million has been made available under the energy efficiency demonstration scheme, the energy efficiency office's R and D programme and the biofuels R and D programme towards the utilisation of domestic and industrial wastes as fuel. Two local authorities, Merseyside county council and Newcastle city council, have received grant assistance totalling £800,000.

Energy Ministers Council

Dr. Michael Clark asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the meeting of the European Communities Council of Energy Ministers of 20 March.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I represented the United Kingdom at the Council of Energy Ministers on 20 March.

The Council discussed the current situation in the oil market. It agreed that the substantial fall in oil prices over the past few weeks would have beneficial effects on the

economic outlook for the Community. It was further agreed that the fall in prices should not have any significant detrimental short term energy effects. There was therefore no reason to adopt new specific Community energy policy measures now.

This approach was reflected in discussion of the proposed Community energy objectives for 1995. Given the current situation in the market, it was not considered appropriate at this juncture to adopt a resolution, but further progress was made on the text.

The Council again considered the draft regulation establishing a new regime governing the payment of state aids to the coal industry. Some major differences of opinion remain to be resolved in the preparations for the June Energy Council. There was also a discussion of the contribution other solid fuels (lignite and peat) could make to diversifying Community energy supplies particularly in certain regions. The Council concluded by welcoming a recent Commission paper on new and renewable sources of energy. This is now to be considered in detail.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Lomé Convention

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to the answer of 17 March to the hon. Member for Warley, East, he will now give the equivalent information about countries receiving aid or loans since 1979 under the first Lomé convention.

Mr. Raison: I shall write to the hon. Member with information about aid commitments by the European Community to Africa, Caribbean and Pacific countries under the first Lomé convention.

TRANSPORT

Reopened Railway Lines

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all sections of previously disused railway line that have been, or are in receipt of his approval to be, reopened in each of the last 10 years and, where appropriate, the extent of the public funding involved in each individual reopening.

Mr. David Mitchell: Those light railway orders made during each of the years in question which were concerned either wholly or partly with reopening disused railways are shown in the following table. My Department did not fund any of them, and does not collect information on funding from other sources. Information about sections of disused railway lines which have been, reopened under other statutory provisions is available only at disproportionate cost.

Year and SI Number		*Title*
1976		None
1977	519	The Alton and Alresford Light Railway Order
	862	The Nene Valley Light Railway Order
	1741	The Abergwili and Llanpumsaint Light Railway Order
1978	471	The Loughborough and Birstall Light Railway Order
	871	The Strathspey Light Railway Order
	1119	The Isle of Wight (Havenstreet & Wootton) Light Railway Order
	1937	The Cranmore Light Railway Order
1979	317	The Steamtown Light Railway Order
	1270	The Yorkshire Dales Light Railway Order
1980	667	The Beddgelert Siding Light Railway Order
	671	The Brecon Mountain Railway (Light Railway) Order
	1660	The Cowes and Newport Light Railway Order
	1969	The Newcastle Emlyn Branch Light Railway Order
1981	62	The Blaenau Ffestiniog (Central Station) Light Railway Order
	512	The Shackerstone and Bosworth Light Railway Order
	1083	The Midland Railway Centre Light Railway Order
1982	512	The Wells and Walsingham Light Railway Order
	1621	The Launceston Light Railway Order
1983	1229	The Yorkshire Dales Light Railway Order
	1955	The Gloucestershire Warwickshire Light Railway Order
1984	557	The Cranmore Light Railway (Extension) Order
	558	The Llangollen and Corwen Light Railway Order
	1202	The Severn Valley Light Railway Order
1985	747	The Six Pit and Upper Bank Junctions Light Railway Order
	810	The Alton Station Light Railway Order
	844	The Lydney and Parkend Light Railway Order
	1578	The Rheilffordd Llyn Tegid Light Railway Order
1986	174	The Bo'ness and Kinneil Light Railway order
	277	East Lancashire Light Railway Order
	343	The Bluebell Extension Light Railway Order

Public Transport (Route Mileage)

Mr. Stott asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the number of route miles currently being run by the Greater Manchester public transport executive.

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the number of route miles currently being run by the South Yorkshire passenger transport executive.

Mr. Snape asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the route miles currently being run by the West Midlands passenger transport executive.

Mr. Dixon asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the route miles currently being run by the Tyne and Wear passenger transport executive.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the route miles currently being run by the Merseyside passenger transport executive.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has of the route miles currently being run by the National Bus Company.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the route miles currently being run by the West Yorkshire passenger transport executive.

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what information he has on the number of route miles currently being run by the Trent Bus Company;

(2) what information he has on the number of route miles currently being run by the East Midlands Bus Company;

(3) what information he has on the number of route miles currently being run by the Chesterfield Corporation public transport executive.

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has of the number of route miles currently run by the Ipswich borough transport authority.

Mr. David Mitchell: The route mileage run by different operators is not held currently.

British Airports Authority

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has determined a new financial target for the British Airports Authority.

Mr. Ridley: I have agreed with the authority that the financial target for the year 1986-87 should be to achieve a minimum rate of return on average net assets of 5·5 per cent. plus one fifth of the percentage growth in the number of terminal passengers in the year. This target is related to trading profit after taking account of current cost depreciation but before any adjustments for loss on disposal of fixed assets and for monetary working capital, and before interest and tax.

The target will be supplemented by two performance aims which emphasise the importance the Government attach to the authority continuing to seek gains in productivity. The authority has agreed the two performance aims, which are:

that costs (excluding depreciation) per terminal passenger handled in 1986-87 should not exceed £4·70, minus a 2 pence adjustment for each additional 1 percentage point increase over the forecast rate of growth of traffic; and to achieve not less than 3·15 terminal passengers handled per payroll hour in 1986-87.

The targets are intended to operate for one year only.

The financial target takes into account the increases in airport charges which have been notified to the airlines by the authority. The target and performance aims complete the normal framework of financial controls which will remain in place whilst the authority or its successor company remains within the public sector.

Road Safety Programmes

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements are being made by his regional offices in conjunction with successor bodies for the co-ordination of road safety programmes including accident, investigation and prevention work, after 1 April 1986 in (i) West Yorkshire, (ii) West Midlands, (iii) Greater Manchester, (iv) Tyne and Wear, (v) Merseyside, (vi) South Yorkshire; and if he will name the successor bodies in each of these metropolitan areas.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March 1986, c. *365*]: Road safety is an integral part of the responsibilities of the district councils as successor authorities. Arrangements for co-ordination are a matter for them. The Department's regional offices have distributed to the district councils advice—notably the guidance note last summer and the code of practice produced by the association of London Borough Engineers and Surveyors. Wherever possible, they have drawn attention in discussion with district councils to the need for effective arrangements for road safety, including co-ordination.

Decisions taken by the district councils are as follows:

	Accident statistics	*Accident analysis*	*Remedial works*	*Education, training and publicity*
West Yorkshire	Leeds (joint data team)		District councils	District councils
West Midlands	Solihull (joint data team)	Solihull (trends) District councils (Geographical analysis)	District councils	District councils
Greater Manchester	Manchester (central team)	District councils (Geographical analysis)	District councils	District councils
South Yorkshire	Doncaster (for District councils)	District councils	District councils	District councils
Merseyside	Residuary body (for District councils)	District councils	District councils	District councils
Tyne and Wear	Gateshead (lead district)		District councils	District councils

EMPLOYMENT

Scottish "Daily Record" and "Sunday Mail"

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Paymaster General if, pursuant to the answer of 21 March, *Official Report*, column *315*, the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service has now received any request to offer its services in negotiations to obtain a settlement in the dispute between the National Union of Journalists and Mr. Robert Maxwell in relation to the Scottish *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail*; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I understand that no request has been made, although ACAS remains ready to assist where it can.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Paymaster General what is his policy towards employment in the

Glasgow area in the light of the redundancies proposed amongst employees of Mirror Group Newspapers Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The Government's economic strategy is providing the climate of low inflation and sustained growth which is the only sensible and proper way to secure real jobs both in Glasgow and elsewhere. On the Mirror Group dispute, I hope that negotiations between management and the unions involved can be pursued urgently to bring this unfortunate dispute to an end.

Advisory Panel on Deregulation

Mr. Ryder asked the Paymaster General what is the composition of the recently appointed Advisory Panel on Deregulation.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The following people have recently been invited to join the advisory panel, which has been set up to provide advice to the enterprise and deregulation unit on the impact of regulations on business:

Mr. Brian Adgey—Managing Director, James Anderson Ltd.
Mr. Brian Crack — Joint Managing Director, Merricks Sico Ltd.
Mr. Colin Dauris—Chairman and Managing Director, James Dauris and Co. Ltd.
Mr. Robert Fleeman — Director, Smaller Business Advisory Services Ltd. and Directors' and Staffs' Advisory Services.
Mr. Colin Hancock—Marketing consultant, and director of companies including one specialising in starter units.
Mr. Ewan Harper—Chairman, Harper and Tunstall Ltd.
Mr. Damon de Laszlo—Chairman, Harwin Engineering and DP Advisers Ltd.
Mr. Clive Parritt — Partner, Howard Tilly and Co., Chartered Accountants.
Mr. Phillip White — Chief Executive, WYKO Group plc.

WALES

GCSE Examinations

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will postpone the introduction of the general certificate of secondary education in Wales until September 1987.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) on 13 March, at column 542.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many teachers from each of the local education authorities in Wales are expected to participate in the special training courses for the General Certificate of Secondary Education examinations being organised under the guidance of the Welsh Office; and how many teachers from each of the Welsh local education authorities, respectively, have so far been on this course.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The programme to prepare teachers for the GCSE is being undertaken by the WJEC with the co-operation of local education authorities. All secondary teachers have opportunities to attend training seminars. I understand that the level of attendance at the first series of seminars organised by the WJEC was patchy but a further series is now under way.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales on what date *(a)* the curriculum and *(b)* the guidelines for administration for the new general certificate of secondary education examinations were issued to each of the Welsh local education authorities.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I presume the hon. Gentleman is referring to the GCSE national criteria, copies of which were distributed to the WJEC, to local education authorities for onward transmission to secondary schools and further education establishments, and to other interested organisations, during the spring of 1985.

Blood Products

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will consider providing extra finance to the University Hospital of Wales to cover the extra funds spent during the summer of 1985 to provide safe heat-treated blood products for haemophiliac patients.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Health authorities are expected to meet the costs of providing safe heat-treated blood products for haemophiliac patients. However, South Glamorgan health authority is expected to submit a case for designating the haemophiliac reference centre, at the University hospital of Wales, as a regional service. If the centre is so designated its running costs will be met by the Welsh Office.

Health Authorities

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if any health authorities or health districts in Wales have been refusing requests for training courses and study leave until April 1986 in an effort to prevent overspend for the current financial year;

(2) which health authorities and health districts in Wales are pursuing a policy of a freeze on all staff vacancies; and how many such vacancies have remained unfilled for six months in each authority or district in Wales;

(3) which health authorities and health districts in Wales are pursuing a policy of a freeze on all local appointments; and for how long such a policy has been in operation.

Mr. Mark Robinson: These are operational matters for each authority to determine: such information is not held centrally.

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales which health authorities and health districts in Wales are pursuing a policy of refraining from the bulk buying of drugs, dressings and other medical equipment; and for how long such policies have been in operation.

Mr. Mark Robinson: None, so far as I am aware. All health authorities in Wales take advantage of the contracts negotiated by the Welsh Health Common Services Authority on an all-Wales basis for the purchase of drugs, dressings and medical equipment.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has received regarding reductions in the provision of Welsh ambulance services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I have received a number of representations, variously from hon. Members, local authorities, community health councils and members of the public, specifically about proposed organisational changes for the ambulance service in Gwynedd and a few inquiries about proposed changes that had been under consideration within the Pembrokeshire health authority.

Public Transport

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much money each county in Wales can expect to receive in order to provide innovatory replacement by way of public transport for those rural areas which otherwise may lose their bus services as a result of the Transport Act 1985; and if he will indicate whether he will have total responsibility for such a scheme for Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I can confirm that my right hon. Friend will have total responsibility for administering the rural transport innovation grant scheme in Wales. The grant is intended to encourage new or improved public passenger transport services for rural communities. As the scheme will be demand determined, it is not possible to forecast what share each county in Wales will receive of the total money allocated. The grant scheme is only one of a number of new measures introduced by the Transport Act 1985 to arrest the decline in rural transport services.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Public Expenditure

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is the spending in real terms *(a)* at present, *(b)* five years ago and *(c)* 10 years ago on average per pupil (i) in secondary schools nationally (ii) in secondary schools in Oxfordshire, (iii) in primary schools nationally and (iv) in primary schools in Oxfordshire;

(2) how much extra money in real terms the Government have made available for education each year since 1979.

Sir Keith Joseph: As pupil numbers in the schools have fallen, spending per pupil has risen to record levels.

The figures requested for net institutional expenditure per pupil nationally and in Oxfordshire are as follows:

Net institutional expenditure per pupil (£ at 1984-85 prices)

	Primary Schools		*Secondary Schools*	
	England £	*Oxfordshire* £	*England* £	*Oxfordshire* £
1974-75	641	673	1,040	1,072
1979-80	653	644	932	902
1984-85*	764	775	1,088	1,069

* Provisional

Outturn public expenditure figures on all areas which fall within the responsibility of the Department, other than expenditure on the science budget, are as follows:

Expenditure (£ million at 1984-85 prices)

	£ million
1979-80	13,112
1980-81	13,447
1981-82	13,282
1982-83	13,369
1983-84	13,471
1984-85	13,408
1985-86*	13,214

* Estimated outturn

The figures in both tables have been revalued to 1984-85 prices using the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator.

Secondary Schools (Basildon)

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the number of children at secondary schools in Basildon in each of the last five years and the number who went on to higher education in each of those years.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is not readily available centrally.

Pupil-teacher Ratios

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what local education authorities *(a)* increased and *(b)* reduced their pupil-to-teacher ratios over the last two years for which figures are available for (i) primary, (ii) secondary schools and (iii) all schools; and which local education authorities have pupil-to-teacher ratios (1) below and (2) above the national average for primary, secondary and all schools.

Mr. Dunn: Comparisons between January 1984 and 1985 of the primary, secondary and overall pupil-teacher ratios in each LEA in England are as follows. Also given is the equivalent comparisons between 1985 and the national average. In the table, plus signs indicate that pupil-teacher ratios have increased or are greater than the national average, and minus signs indicate the opposite.

	Comparison between 1984 and 1985 PTRs			*Comparison of 1985 PTR with national average*		
	Primary	*Secondary*	*Overall*	*Primary*	*Secondary*	*Overall*
Barking	–	–	–	–	–	–
Barnet	+	n/c	+	–	–	–
Bexley	–	n/c	–	+	+	+
Brent	+	–	–	–	–	–
Bromley	–	+	–	+	+	+
Croydon	n/c	–	–	–	–	–
Ealing	+	–	–	–	–	–
Enfield	–	–	–	+	–	–

	Comparison between 1984 and 1985 PTRs			Comparison of 1985 PTR with national average		
	Primary	*Secondary*	*Overall*	*Primary*	*Secondary*	*Overall*
Haringey	+	–	n/c	–	–	–
Harrow	+	+	+	–	–	–
Havering	–	–	–	+	–	–
Hillingdon	+	n/c	+	+	–	+
Hounslow	+	+	+	–	–	–
Kingston-upon-Thames	–	–	–	n/c	–	–
Merton	–	–	–	–	+	–
Newham	–	–	–	–	–	–
Redbridge	+	n/c	+	+	–	+
Richmond-upon-Thames	+	+	n/c	–	+	–
Sutton	+	–	+	+	+	+
Waltham Forest	+	+	+	–	–	–
ILEA	–	–	+	–	–	–
Birmingham	–	–	–	+	+	+
Coventry	+	–	–	+	–	–
Dudley	+	–	n/c	+	–	+
Sandwell	–	–	–	+	–	–
Solihull	+	–	–	+	+	+
Walsall	n/c	–	–	–	–	–
Wolverhampton	n/c	+	–	–	–	–
Knowsley	n/c	–	–	–	–	–
Liverpool	–	–	–	–	–	–
St. Helens	–	–	–	+	–	–
Sefton	+	+	+	+	+	+
Wirral	+	–	+	+	–	+
Bolton	+	–	–	+	–	+
Bury	–	–	–	+	–	–
Manchester	–	–	–	–	–	–
Oldham	–	–	–	+	+	+
Rochdale	+	–	+	+	–	–
Salford	–	–	–	–	–	–
Stockport	–	–	–	+	+	+
Tameside	–	–	–	+	–	n/c
Trafford	+	–	–	+	+	+
Wigan	–	–	n/c	–	–	–
Barnsley	n/c	–	–	–	+	–
Doncaster	+	+	+	–	+	–
Rotherham	–	–	–	–	+	+
Sheffield	–	–	n/c	–	–	–
Bradford	+	–	–	–	+	–
Calderdale	–	–	–	–	+	–
Kirklees	–	–	–	–	+	+
Leeds	–	–	+	+	+	–
Wakefield	–	–	n/c	–	+	+
Gateshead	+	–	–	–	–	–
Newcastle upon Tyne	+	+	+	–	–	–
North Tyneside	–	–	–	–	–	–
South Tyneside	+	–	–	–	–	–
Sunderland	n/c	–	–	–	–	–
Isles of Scilly	+	+	–	–	–	–
Avon	+	+	+	+	+	+
Bedfordshire	–	–	–	+	+	+
Berkshire	+	–	–	+	–	n/c
Buckinghamshire	–	–	n/c	+	+	+
Cambridgeshire	–	+	–	+	+	+
Cheshire	+	+	n/c	+	+	+
Cleveland	+	+	+	n/c	+	+
Cornwall	–	n/c	–	+	+	+
Cumbria	–	–	–	–	–	–
Derbyshire	+	–	–	+	+	+
Devon	+	–	n/c	+	+	+
Dorset	+	n/c	–	+	+	+
Durham	+	n/c	n/c	–	+	+
East Sussex	+	n/c	n/c	+	+	+
Essex	–	–	–	+	+	+
Gloucestershire	+	–	n/c	+	+	+
Hampshire	+	+	n/c	+	+	+
Hereford & Worcester	–	–	–	+	+	+
Hertfordshire	–	–	–	n/c	–	n/c
Humberside	n/c	n/c	–	–	+	–
Isle of Wight	+	–	–	+	+	+
Kent	–	–	–	+	+	+
Lancashire	+	+	+	+	+	+
Leicestershire	+	+	n/c	+	n/c	n/c
Lincolnshire	+	+	n/c	+	+	+
Norfolk	–	–	–	–	+	+

	Comparison between 1984 and 1985 PTRs			Comparison of 1985 PTR with national average		
	Primary	Secondary	Overall	Primary	Secondary	Overall
North Yorkshire	+	+	n/c	−	+	+
Northamptonshire	+	−	−	n/c	+	−
Northumberland	n/c	−	−	+	+	+
Nottinghamshire	−	−	−	−	−	−
Oxfordshire	n/c	n/c	−	+	+	+
Salop	−	−	+	−	−	n/c
Somerset	+	n/c	−	+	+	+
Staffordshire	+	−	+	+	n/c	+
Suffolk	n/c	+	n/c	−	+	+
Surrey	−	−	−	+	+	+
Warwickshire	+	−	−	+	+	+
West Sussex	+	−	+	+	+	+
Wiltshire	−	+	+	+	+	+

Notes:

1. In columns 1-3, "+" indicates that the 1985 PTR is higher than that for 1984; a "−" indicates that the 1985 PTR is lower than that for 1984. In columns 4-6, a "+" indicates that the 1985 PTR is higher than the national average, a "−" that the 1984 PTR is lower than the national average.
2. n/c=No Change.

Microelectronics Support Unit

Mrs. Renèe Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what kind of information support services will be provided to local education authorities by the microelectronics support unit; and how its budget for the financial year 1986-87 is to be spent.

Mr. Chris Patten: The management board of the microelectronics support unit, which met for the first time on 18 March, has yet to decide on these issues. The unit's budget of £3 million in 1986-87 will be distributed broadly over the areas of information provision, training the trainers, the development of curriculum materials, and new technology in special education.

GCSE Examinations

Mrs. Renèe Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science on what factors he bases the sum of £20 million as being a suitable figure for introducing the general certificate of secondary education examinations into the school curriculum later in the current year; and how many staff he expected to be able to train to aid this process within the £200,000 sum he is allocating for staff training.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend's proposal to pay education support grant up to a total of £20 million is intended to support expenditure on books and equipment for the GCSE. It is not intended to represent the total relevant expenditure, but will allow local education authorities to fund a real increase in meeting the demands brought by the new GCSE syllabuses. It is not possible to draw up precise estimates for the expenditure involved as these will vary from school to school in the light of present stocks, past provision for examination syllabuses and present choice of GCSE syllabuses.

The Government are making a contribution of over £9·5 million to the national programme of in-service training for the GCSE. The additional sum of £200,000, announced by my right hon. Friend, is intended to enable the groups to mount additional training seminars for those subject representatives who have so far failed to attend them. The action that the Government have taken, including allowing schools to close to pupils for two days in this summer term for training purposes, will allow all teachers of the GCSE to undertake GCSE in-service training.

Mentally Handicapped Students

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many mentally handicapped students aged 16 to 19 years have left special schools in each of the last five years for which figures are available;

(2) how many mentally handicapped students, and of what age, have been in mainstream schools or units attached to them in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Dunn: The information is not available centrally.

Bogus University Degrees

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the issuing of bogus university degrees; from which bodies he has received them; and what responses he has given.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations from individuals, including several hon. Members, and from the College of Preceptors. Replies have emphasised that the government deplore the trade in bogus degrees and explained that proposals for possible legislation to curtail the activities of operators in this field are under consideration. I shall be replying to the College of Preceptors in similar vein.

Cash Limits

Mr. Alan Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give details of any revised cash limits for his Department's Votes in 1985-86.

Sir Keith Joseph: Cash limits for two of the Department's Votes for 1985-86 have been revised downwards to reflect estimated outturn. The adjustments are as follows:

£'000

Class	Vote	Description of expenditure	Current cash limit	Reduction	Revised cash limit
X	1	Schools, further education and other services	211,118	270	210,848
X	3	Universities, etc.	1,514,342	4,353	1,509,989

PRIME MINISTER

EC Budget

Mr. Richard Shepherd asked the Prime Minister what specific proposals Her Majesty's Government have made to the European Economic Community Commission for reductions in the EEC budget for 1985-86

The Prime Minister: Details of the 1985 budget as adopted are contained in the 1985 Community budget.

My hon. Friend, the Minister of State, Treasury represented the United Kingdom at the Budget Council's Second Reading of the 1986 budget on 26-27 November 1985. He argued that while it was axiomatic that the understandings on budgetary matters reached with Spain and Portugal during the accession negotiations must be fully respected, the Council should not propose special extra provision for the "cost of the past" problem, which should be solved by reducing new commitments rather than increasing payments. The proposed increase in non-obligatory expenditure represented a threat to budget discipline. The United Kingdom accordingly opposed the revised draft budget, which was adopted by qualified majority. The United Kingdom continued to press this line strongly at the third meeting of the Budget Council on 11-12 December, where we again voted against the Council's revised draft budget.

North-West

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will give details of each official visit she has made to the north-west of England since she became Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: The details are as follows:

Date of visit and Places visited

31 August 1979
Manchester
Skelmersdale
Atherton
Pendlebury
Rawtenstall
Salford

6 June 1980
Winsford
Runcorn

10 April 1981
Nesion
Heswall

13 July 1981
Liverpool

15 January 1982
Salford
Manchester

17 and 18 February 1983
Bamber Bridge
Salterforth
Bacup
Rossendale

21 September 1984
Chester

2 October 1984
Liverpool

22 August 1985
Manchester

1 November 1985
Capenhurst
Springfields
Sellafield
Heysham

Shops Bill *[Lords]*

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister what is the latest number of representations received for and against the proposals in the Shops Bill *[Lords]*.

The Prime Minister: The Government have received about 7,700 representations in favour of our proposals and about 45,500 representations against since the debate on the Auld report in the House of Commons in May last year.

Ministers (Share Dealings)

Mr. Skinner asked the Prime Minister (1) if she will appoint an independent public inquiry into the share dealings by or on behalf of her since 1979;

(2). if she will make a statement regarding the purchase or sale of shares in which she has been involved since 1979.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to exchanges in the House on 25 March, at columns 781-82.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Prime Minister (1) what are the rules of conduct for Ministers governing speculation in shares in their own name and in their own account;

(2) if she will place in the Library a copy of the rules of conduct for Ministers as they affect the ownership and buying and selling of stocks and shares; and if there have been any infractions since 1979.

The Prime Minister: The then Secretary of the Cabinet submitted a memorandum to the Royal Commission on standards of conduct in public life in 1975, a copy of which is in the Library. The conventions have not changed since then.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Prime Minister if, in the light of her recent purchase and sale of shares in Broken Hill Proprietary, she will set up an inquiry into whether new rules are needed to govern the conduct of Ministers in share dealings in their own name and on their own account.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member's question is based on a false premise.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister whether Her Majesty's Government were informed and their approval

sought for discussion of the detailed and classified items from the memorandum of understanding by the strategic defence initiative organisation for Tuesday 25 March in Washington.

The Prime Minister: A symposium on SDI research was organised by the strategic defence initiative organisation and took place in Washington on Tuesday 25 March. The symposium's content was planned in close consultation with the United Kingdom SDI participation office and the British defence staff in Washington, both of whom provided speakers at the event.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

South-West Mechanised Letter Office

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Lord Privy Seal, pursuant to the answer of 20 March to the hon. Member for Leicester, East, *Official Report*, column 294, if he will initiate discussions about the installation of a House of Commons postmark facility under secure arrangements, at the south-west mechanised letter office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I shall reply as soon as possible.

ENVIRONMENT

Rates

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the total rate rise in poundage and percentage terms, at ratepayer level, in every local authority in England between 1979-80 and 1985-86, whole period, ranked from biggest increase to smallest increase, by class.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have today placed in the Library the available information covering the period 1981-82 to 1985-86 for all rating authorities, and for the period 1979-80 to 1985-86 for metropolitan districts and London boroughs. Information for shire districts for the earlier period can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Basildon

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses Basildon district council and Basildon development corporation have sold in each of the last seven years.

Sir George Young: I have today placed in the Library the latest version of the regular table showing total sales completed by local authorities in England betweeen 1 April 1979 and December 1985.

Dwelling Sales reported by Basildon district council and development corporation in each of the years 1980-81 to 1984-85 appear in the following issues of "Local Housing Statistics" which are available in the Library:

	Issue number
1980-81	62
1981-82	63
1982-83	67
1983-84 } 1984-85 }	75

Basildon district council reported sales of 28 dwellings in 1979-80 and 104 in the first nine months of 1985-86. Basildon development corporation sold 762 dwellings in the period May 1979 to March 1980 and 341 in the first nine months of 1985-86.

Natural and Man-made Heritage

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what effect he expects the tax proposals in the Budget to have on the flow of private funds into the conservation of both the natural and man-made heritage; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Charitable giving is likely to increase by at least £120 million a year as a result of the imaginative innovations in my right hon. Friend's Budget. This will be more cost-effective than equivalent state help. What share of the eventual total will go to the natural and man-made heritage will depend upon givers' preferences. I would warmly encourage as many people as possible to show their concern for the heritage in this way.

Forestry

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the basis for the claim by the chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council in the latest annual report that the present overall forestry policy based on the planning of the poorer agricultural land needs to be reconsidered.

Mrs. Rumbold: This statement by the chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council reflects his council's concern about extensive planting of hill land and blanket bog, mainly in the north of Scotland. The council considers that much of this land is of high value for nature conservation and that afforestation can destroy or seriously damage these open ground habitats. The Nature Conservancy Council believes that consideration should be given to encouraging the planting of other areas. It is currently engaged in a study of afforestation and nature conservation in Britain, which will be published later this year.

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the basis for the claim by the chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council in the latest annual report that, in the north of Scotland, the financial regime of tax concessions and grants designed for the creation of a national asset in timber is being stretched by the wholesale planting of land.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Nature Conservancy Council calculates that 14,500 hectares of blanket bog in Sutherland and Caithness has now been planted, much of it in the last six years, and if planting continues at this rate 75 per cent. of the peatland below 250 metres will be lost over the next three or four decades. The Nature Conservancy Council takes the view that the availability of grants and tax concessions constitute the main incentive for this activity.

Royal Parks Constabulary

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the actual and authorised establishment of the Royal Parks constabulary.

Mr. Tracey: The current authorised establishment of the Royal Parks constabulary is 164, and the current strength is 146. Recruitment is in hand.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many locations are policed by the Royal Parks constabulary; and if he will list them.

Mr. Tracey: The list is as follows:

1. *Central Parks*
   Abingdon Street Garden
   Brompton Cemetery
   Green Park
   Grosvenor Square Garden
   Kensington Gardens
   Parliament Square Gardens
   St. James's Park
   The Natural History Museum Gardens
   The Tower of London Gardens
   Victoria Tower Gardens
2. *Regent's Park*
   Regent's Park
   Primrose Hill

3. *Greenwich Park*

4. *Hampton Court*
   Bushy Park
   Hampton Court Gardens
   Hampton Court Green
   Hampton Court Park

5. *Richmond*
   Richmond Park
   Ham House Grounds
   Osterley Park

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements are made for co-operation between the Royal Parks constabulary and local police forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: The Royal Parks constabulary police areas only within Greater London and therefore day-to-day liaison is with the Metropolitan police. Close co-operartion exists between the forces, particularly in respect of ceremonial occasions, other special events and training.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the source of the recruitment of the majority of persons for the Royal Parks constabulary.

Mr. Tracey: Recruits are in the main drawn from the Greater London area and its surrounds in response to advertisements.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements there are for reporting annually in the activities and work of the Royal Parks constabulary.

Mr. Tracey: An annual report by the Chief Officer has been provided since 1982. These reports are widely circulated and copies are placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the annual budget of the Royal Parks constabulary.

Mr. Tracey: The total expenditure of the Royal Parks constabulary for the current financial year—excluding accommodation costs, which are not separately identified—is expected to be just over £2 million.

Thurrock

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much extra housing investment programme allocation has been made available to Thurrock borough council for the 1986-87 financial year to assist the owners of prefabricated reinforced concrete homes under the provisions made in the Housing Defects Act 1984.

Sir George Young: Thurrock borough council's HIP allocation for 1986-87 was increased by £606,000 (23 per cent.) over that for the current year. In making this increase, we took account of the likely need for expenditure under the Housing Defects Act 1984.

Waste (Fuel Conversion)

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with, and what financial assistance he has made available to, local authorities on the conversion of domestic and industrial refuse into fuel.

Mrs. Rumbold: About £3 million has been made available to Tyne and Wear and South Yorkshire metropolitan county councils for the development of their mechanical waste sorting plants producing waste-derived fuel from domestc and trade waste. This has been augmented by funding supplied by my Department under separate research contracts for studies and development work on production of fuel from a range of waste undertaken at the Department of Trade and Industry's Warren Spring laboratory.

Our officials have held discussions on the conversion of domestic and trade waste into fuel with Humberside CC, Isle of Wight CC, East Sussex CC, West Sussex CC, and Merseyside MCC amongst others. The latter two have also received modest funding for minor studies on mechanical waste sorting.

Discussions have taken place from time to time with various bodies, including local authorities, on the recovery of energy from domestic waste as landfill gas (methane).

Rating

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will detail for the last 10 years the number of councillors and the authorities which they represent who have asked for dispensation in order to vote against proposals to rate empty property.

Mr. Waldegrave: Since February 1978, 34 applications for dispensation under section 97 of the Local Government Act 1972 on proposals to rate empty property have been received from members of Babergh, Rochester-upon-Medway, and Wirral district councils. Dispensations were granted in each case. Information on voting intentions on specific proposals is not sought by the Secretary of State in considering such applications.

Details of applications received before February 1978 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Landscape Areas Special Development Order 1950

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what conclusions the Government have reached on the proposals for extending the Landscape

Areas Special Development Order 1950 set out in the consulation paper issued by his Department and the Welsh Office on 18 April 1985.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales have considered the proposals for extending the Landscape Areas Special Development Order 1950 very carefully in the light of the many helpful responses received to the consultation paper.

We proposed to introduce a new order to give all national park authorities in England and Wales discretion to require approval of the design, external appearance and siting of farm and forestry buildings and roads, where such development is carried out as permitted development under the general development order.

At present, LASDO applies to some areas not within current national park boundaries. The arrangements under the order have been working satisfactorily there since they were introduced in 1950 and the new order will apply in those areas as well.

We propose to increase from 14 to 28 days the period within which the local planning authority may require that the details of development proposals be subject to its approval. While this will mean a slight further delay before the developer may proceed without further ado, it should reduce the likelihood that the authority will require submission of details unnecessarily.

The consultation paper noted that discretionary grants under section 44 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 could be made by national park authorities as a means of recompensing farmers for disproportionately large additional costs incurred as a result of an authority's design requirements. It was put to us in the course of consultation that the payment of such discretionary grants could, however, for technical reasons, prevent the payment of farm capital grant.

We have concluded that claims for farm capital grant on the full cost of an investment should not be prejudiced by offers of grant by national park authorities towards the cost attributable to supplementary work required by them.

However, the payment of farm capital grant at the appropriate rate on the full cost of the projected investment must not bring the total amount payable on such supplementary work to more than 50 per cent. in the less favoured areas or 35 per cent. elsewhere.

We feel that the new arrangements will provide a fitting and just system of compensation for the farming community.

I am satisfied that the proposals represent a sensible approach to farm and forestry development in national parks. They allow planning authorities to require, as necessary, approval of the relevant plans, but do not impose full planning controls. The new order will provide an extra safeguard for the environment without imposing any significant burden either on the local planning authority or on farmers and foresters.

We propose to lay the new order before the House in the spring.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the will make a statement about his policy on the application of section 55(3) of the Local Government Act 1985 in the light of circular No. 15 from the London and Metropolitan Government Staff Commission on post-abolition recruitment procedures.

Mr. Tracey: Sir Philip Woodfield, chairman of the London and Metropolitan Government Staff Commission, wrote to my noble Friend the Minister of State on 21 March enclosing a copy of circular No. 15 and asking about the Government's policy on the application of section 55(3) of this Act as it might affect the recruitment of former employees of the GLC and the metropolitan county councils who will benefit from the commission's decision, announced in its circular, that its ring-fending procedures will remain in place for a time after the abolition of those councils.

The text of my noble Friend's reply, setting out our policy, is as follows:

Thank you for your letter of 21 March enclosing a copy of the Commission's latest Circular on post-abolition ring-fence arrangements. Whilst I would hope that the successor authorities keep up their good work of recent weeks and make timely job offers to the new staff they decide they need, I do recognise that there may unfortunately be GLC and MCC employees left redundant at abolition who will still be seeking to find new jobs elsewhere in local government. I therefore welcome the enhanced opportunities which your decision will give these people to resume careers interrupted through no fault of their own.

I think that you and your colleagues on the Commission need have no fears that the power in section 55(3) of the Local Government Act 1985 will work against this objective. As you know, this empowers—but does not require—the Secretary of State to direct a successor authority to pay to the appropriate body a sum equal to the redundancy payment and compensation paid to a former GLC/MCC employee left redundant at abolition and subsequently recruited by the authority. It was, however, never Ministers' intention to use this power simply because GLC/MCC staff who had been made redundant were subsequently re-engaged after an interval of time by a successor authority, and, indeed, section 55(4) ensures that this could not happen.

In deciding whether to issue such a direction, the Secretary of State has to consider whether or not the authority concerned could reasonably have made a timely offer of the job. Obviously this would be a matter of judgment in each case, and I cannot prejudge what view the Secretary of State might take. But it would be our general policy not to direct recovery in cases where we were satisfied that an authority had made good efforts to recruit the people concerned. And we would, in general, only direct recovery when we had good reason to conclude that the authority had not made sufficient efforts to comply with its duties under sections 55(1) and (2).

It does seem that, in general, the successor authorities have made considerable progress in discharging the duties laid on them by section 55(1) and (2)—to make early decisions on the extra staff they need, and to make timely job offers to GLC/MCC employees they wish to recruit. Accordingly, I would expect there to be very few cases in which the question of issuing a direction under section 55(3) might arise.

I hope this reassures you and your colleagues about the intended effect of this provision.

Urban Housing Renewal Unit

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has reached a decision on proposals submitted to his urban housing renewal unit by the city of Kingston upon Hull; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I am pleased to announce my right hon. Friend's favourable response to a proposal for a scheme in Hull which the city council has worked up in close consultation with my Department's urban housing

renewal unit and our Yorkshire and Humberside regional office. We hope to reach agreement with the council on further packages in due course.

The estate which will benefit from today's decision is the Danes, part of the Orchard Park estate on the outskirts of Hull. This estate consists of 652 Wimpey "no fines" construction terraced houses, six maisonettes and 318 flats in three high-rise blocks.

My Department's priority estates project is working with the council to set up locally-based management and repairs arrangements on the estate. An accessible estate-based housing management office will be established and will provide a comprehensive housing service to residents. I regard this as an essential part of the package in order for the council to sustain the improvements which we expect to see as a result of the other steps being taken.

One such step will be a two-year community refurbishment scheme (CRS) to enable local unemployed people funded jointly by my Department's urban programme and the Government's community programme, subject to consideration and support by the Manpower Services Commission's area board, to carry out improvements to the environment and communal areas on their own estate. Resources of the order of £1,005,000 will be involved including £732,000 of urban programme funding, which I am pleased to approve in principle.

I have also agreed to an additional capital allocation of £845,500 from UHRU's targeted housing investment programme resources in 1986-87 to enable the council to carry out repairs on the fabric of the terraced dwellings and environmental and security works around the high-rise flats.

This scheme is yet another example of the type of proposals being worked up through close co-operation between a local authority, my Department's urban housing renewal unit and regional offices. I now look forward to seeing these proposals being put into action for the benefit of the residents at the Danes.

Mr. Andy Stewart asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has reached a decision on proposals submitted to his urban housing renewal unit by the city of Leeds; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Earlier today my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction announced in Leeds my right hon. Friend's favourable response to a proposal for a scheme on part of the Gipton South estate which the council has worked up in collaboration with my Department's urban housing renewal unit and our Yorkshire and Humberside regional office. Gipton South is a large inter-war cottage estate, on which 910 dwellings are to benefit from a package of revitalisation measures. The proposals include capital improvements to the dwellings, a community refurbishment scheme (CRS) and the development of a local repairs service building on the local housing office which has already been set up on the estate.

The CRS will provide for environmental improvements and landscaping, the appointment of a tenants' support worker, and the establishment of a local repairs team. Some £784,000 will be made available over two years, of which £456,000 will fall to my Department's urban programme and £328,000 to the Government's community programme, subject to consideration and support by the Manpower Services Commission's area board. Leeds city council will be contributing some £47,000 to the CRS.

The city council has also submitted a bid for capital resources for Gipton South from UHRU's targeted housing investment programme (HIP) allocation. I have agreed in principle to an additional HIP allocation of up to £750,000 in 1986-87 to carry out work on the external fabric of the dwellings.

I welcome this package and I am glad that Leeds has joined the growing number of local authorities to benefit from the advice and resources of my Department's urban housing renewal unit. We hope to reach agreement on further proposals from Leeds in due course.

Mr. Lightbown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has reached a decision on proposals submitted to his urban housing renewal unit by the city of Bradford; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Earlier today my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction announced in Bradford my right hon. Friend's favourable response to a proposal for a package of measures on the Holmewood estate which the council has worked up in a close consultation with my Department's urban housing renewal unit. We hope to reach agreement with the council on further schemes in due course.

The Council is in the process of decentralising its housing management and will open a local management office at Holmewood within the next few months. This office will employ staff to deal with lettings and the management of the repair and maintenance system. Locally-based management is a key factor both in helping to establish the other proposals agreed with the urban housing renewal unit and in keeping up the momentum once they have been implemented to enable the residents to enjoy a continued improvement in their quality of life.

The part of the estate which will benefit from the package is known at Holmewood B and consists of 1,114 dwellings comprising a mixture of houses, flats, bungalows and maisonettes. Bradford metropolitan council has submitted a bid for resources from the unit's targeted housing investment programme (HIP) allocation to carry out various capital improvements. They include measures to reduce condensation and improve insulation, new windows and doors, gas central heating installation and a rewiring programme. I have agreed in principle to an additional HIP allocation of up to £1,198,400 for this programme in 1986-87.

The estate will also benefit from a community refurbishment scheme (CRS) which will enable local unemployed people to carry out environmental improvements and refurbishment of communal areas on their own estate over a two-year period. The CRS will provide more than 100 jobs and will be funded by the Government's community programme, subject to consideration and support by the Manpower Services Commission's area board, and my Department's urban programme. Resources of the order of £1,162,000 will be involved, including some £328,000 of urban programme funding, which I am pleased to approve in principle.

I welcome this package which has been developed through close co-operation between Bradford council, my Department's Yorkshire and Humberside regional office and the staff of the urban housing renewal unit.

SCOTLAND

Local Government Finance

10. **Mr. McKelvey** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from Kilmarnock and Loudoun district council on the matter of local government finance.

Mr. Ancram: None recently.

18. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the guidelines set for current local authority expenditure on education and on local authorities' capital expenditure programmes on education.

Mr. Ancram: There are no guidelines set for local authority current expenditure on education. The Government's overall provision for local authority services is discussed annually with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities through the established consultative structure. On capital expenditure programmes, a number of representations have been received directly from authorities and individuals covering a variety of issues and education projects.

Farm Grants (Drainage and Re-seeding)

12. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will meet the National Farmers Union of Scotland to discuss the re-introduction of grants for drainage and re-seeding of farm land.

Mr. John MacKay: No. Adequate grant provision is already available for drainage and re-seeding under the agriculture improvement scheme (European Community).

Crofter Housing

13. **Mr. Donald Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will raise the level of grant and loan for crofter housing.

Mr. John MacKay: Yes. My right hon. and learned Friend is arranging for the details to be printed in the *Official Report* and placed in the Library of the House.

We propose increases in the order of one third. With effect from today, assistance available under the crofters building grants and loans scheme (CBGLS) will be increased as indicated in the table. The present levels are included for information.

	Present levels			*Revised levels*		
	Grant £	*Loan* £	*Total* £	*Grant* £	*Loan* £	*Total* £
New house	6,500	10,000	16,500	8,700	13,500	22,200
House improvement	750	6,000	6,750	1,500	8,000	9,500
Farm building (erection or improvement)	3,750	—	3,750	5,000	—	5,000

The new levels of assistance will be available in the usual way to new applicants, to applicants whose applications are currently under consideration and to those who have had applications approved but who have not yet started work.

Coal Industry

14. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will commission an independent study into the potential contribution of the coal industry to the Scottish economy.

Mr. Allan Stewart: No. The Scottish coal industry is already being restructured in a manner that will strengthen its ability to make a continuing, positive contribution to the Scottish economy.

Agricultural Colleges

15. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement concerning transitional arrangements for the operation of the Scottish agricultural colleges between the reduction in public funding and the proposed increase in funds derived from the industry.

Mr. MacKay: It is for the management of the Scottish agricultural colleges to ensure that their operational costs are contained within the overall resources available to them, whether derived from public or private sources of income. The changes required in the management of the public funds and other resources available to the colleges are under consideration by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and the colleges.

National Union of Students

16. **Mr. Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next have a meeting with officers of the Scottish National Union of Students.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I met representatives of the National Union of Students (Scotland) on 17 March about financial support for students and the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council's report on its review of higher education in Scotland. No further meeting is at present planned.

Trunk Roads

17. **Mr. Henderson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the progress of the trunk road programme in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: I am arranging for the list of major trunk road schemes started since 1 April 1985 and those expected to start by 31 March 1987 to be published in the *Official Report* and placed in the Library of the House.

The following schemes with estimated cost over £1 million have been started since 1 April 1985:

A7 Synton to Mossend
M74 Draffan to Millbank, stage III
A82 Auchentullich to Polnaberoch (Loch Lomond)
A82 Dubh Eas stage II
A835 Contin river bridge
A9 Alness bypass
A94 Forfar bypass

The following schemes with estimated cost over £1 million are expected to start by 31 March 1987:

A75 Anna bypass
A75 Castle Douglas bypass
A75 Ringford bypass
A82 Auchendennan to Arden (Loch Lomond)
A830 Kinsadel to Mallaig, stage I
A9 Mound bridges
A92 Murcar to Balmedie
A929 Kingsway to Powrie
A96 Auldearn bypass
A96 Bucksburn to Tyrebagger, stage I
A96 Forres bypass

Health Sevice (Privatisation)

19. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress is being made in introducing private contractors for services in the Health Service in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Several health boards are in the process of testing the cost effectiveness of their support services by putting them out to competitive tender. The Common Services Agency, Grampian and Tayside health boards have so far let contracts with savings which range from 8 to 31 per cent. Two of these contracts have been awarded to private companies. I expect to see further progress in competitive tendering from the reports which are due to be submitted by boards at the end of March.

Licensing Laws

20. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to introduce legislation to amend the licensing laws in the light of the conclusions of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' survey on drinking habits.

Mr. John MacKay: The final results of the survey are being considered and a consultation document is being prepared with a view to discussing what, if any, changes to the law might usefully be made.

Unemployment

21. **Mr. MacKenzie** asked the Seretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: On 6 February 1986 the number of unemployed claimants in Scotland was 367,198—3,919 fewer than in the previous month. This gives room for encouragement but none for complacency, since the seasonally adjusted figures were virtually unchanged. Continued high unemployment remains a major problem; but the Government's economic strategy is the only sensible means of creating the steady growth on which improved employment prospects for the people of Scotland depend.

22. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he is taking to reduce unemployment in Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In addition to the measures which the Government are taking generally to combat unemployment and encourage the creation of new jobs, action is being taken in Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley by the Manpower Services Commission and other agencies. The Scottish Development Agency is active in support for the local enterprise trust (CADET), in environmental and land engineering projects, and in factory building. NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. supports the enterprise trust and gives financial assistance for business projects, the conversion of premises and other measures. The Scottish Development Agency and NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. jointly commissioned last year a review of the local economy with a view to developing a further programme of action for the area. The review will be completed shortly.

29. **Mr. Lambie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for alleviating unemployment in Ayrshire.

Mr. Rifkind: The best means of improving employment prospects in Ayrshire, as elsewhere in Great Britain, lies in the Government's economic strategy of keeping inflation down, offering real incentive for enterprise and restoring competitiveness to industry. The full range of the Manpower Services Commission's special employment and training measures is available in Ayrshire on a continuing basis. In addition, Scotland's first enterprise trust, launched in 1981 (the Ardrossan, Saltcoats, Stevenston enterprise trust, known as ASSET) has helped over 250 companies and created well over 1,000 jobs and training places in the area.

Urban Deprivation

23. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the urban aid programme in tackling deprivation in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: Assessement of the effectiveness of the urban programme is an ongoing exercise. A review of the criteria and priorities of the programme was undertaken in 1984. This did not alter the basic concept of the programme but led to improved effectiveness, including the tighter targeting of eligible areas to ensure that available resources are directed to the worst urban areas of multiple deprivation in Scotland.

The Scottish Development Department also undertakes an evaluation of a random sample of projects on an annual basis.

Concessionary Fares

24. **Mr. Allen Adams** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation which will allow regional authorities in Scotland to extend their concessionary fares schemes to the unemployed.

Mr. Ancram: The Government have no plans to extend eligibility in this way.

Economic Situation

25. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will assess the impact of the recent Budget statement on the economy of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The combination of continued growth and low inflation forecast in the Budget statement is a tribute to the success of the Government's economic policy, and will have a favourable impact on the Scottish economy. I very much welcome the cuts in income tax,

and beneficial consequences for the whisky industry of keeping the duty on spirits unchanged. The decisions to expand the community programme and to extend the pilot schemes for the long-term unemployed are of particular importance in the fight against unemployment in Scotland.

Schools (Parental Choice)

26. **Mr. Michael Forsyth** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will consider proposals to extend parental choice and control in schools.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Government have already done a great deal to extend parental choice, for example through the parents' charter and the assisted places scheme. But the subject will be kept under review.

Glasgow Eastern Area Renewal

27. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to visit the Glasgow eastern area renewal project area of Glasgow to assess progress with the implementation of the project's objectives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to visit the GEAR area.

I shall be meeting representatives of the seven participating bodies on Monday 14 April for a meeting of the project governing committee. The evaluation of the project's achievements in terms of its objectives will be on our agenda.

Inverclyde Initiative

28. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of the Inverclyde initiative.

Mr. Allan Stewart: A priority programme of measures at a cost of up to £6 million is well under way and the Scottish Development Agency will have spent some £3·5 million by the end of this financial year. Considerable efforts are being made to identify projects which will generate investment and attract business to the area, and the initiative has recently submitted proposals for the redevelopment of the Customs house quay site in Greenock which could create 700 jobs.

Railways (Capital Expenditure)

30. **Mr. Martin** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy that funds allocated to Strathclyde for capital expenditure on transport in respect of railways should be spent with railway workshops in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: While I require Strathclyde regional council to contain its capital expenditure on roads and transport within its approved allocation, detailed decisions on priorities and on its placing of contracts are for the council itself to take. As regards decisions on contracts, the council will no doubt have in mind the need to obtain lowest prices and best value for money.

Manufacturing Industry (Strathclyde)

31. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will visit Strathclyde regional council to discuss with it the prospects for manufacturing industry.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so at present.

Ancient Monuments

32. **Mr. Fairbairn** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to visit the ancient monuments of Scotland in his charge with a view to their sale to private owners.

Mr. Rifkind: I look forward to visiting ancient monuments in my care as opportunity allows, but I see little scope for selling them to private owners.

Manufacturing Industry

33. **Mr. Gordon Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many manufacturing jobs have been lost in Scotland since June 1979.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The number of employees in employment in manufacturing in Scotland is provisionally estimated to have fallen by 176,000, on a seasonally adjusted basis, between June 1979 and September 1985.

Community Councils

34. **Mr. Hugh Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on the future of community councils.

Mr. Ancram: None.

Regional Policy

35. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent reassessment has been made of regional aids to industry in Scotland; what representations he has received from Fife regional council on these matters; and what reply has been made.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Basic changes in regional policy were introduced only some 16 months ago and the Government have no plans for a further review of policy at present. The operation of the current schemes of assistance is being closely monitored and the results will be taken into account in deciding what changes are desirable in the administration of the schemes.

I have agreed to meet a deputation from Fife to discuss the effects of the regional policy changes on the region.

Drugs Misuse

36. **Mr. McTaggart** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money the Scottish Office has made available to health boards for the specific purpose of tackling drugs misuse.

Mr. John MacKay: Services for the treatment of drug misusers are usually provided as part of the general practitioner and hospital and community-based services, and the expenditure incurred by health boards in providing treatment specifically for drug misusers cannot be separately identified. My right hon. and learned Friend has, however, already made available over £1 million to provide support for a range of local initiatives by health boards, local authorities and voluntary organisations which are specifically concerned with the treatment and rehabilitation of drug misusers. Support for these projects

from the health programme in the financial year 1986-87 will amount to about £700,000 and it is planned to maintain at about this level annually the amount of resources set aside for the encouragement and assistance of drug treatment and rehabilitation services.

Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill

37. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the outcome of his consultation exercise in Scotland on the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer to the answer which I gave to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 24 March at columns *352-53*.

Dental Treatment

38. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will institute a review of the extent to which dental treatment is dictated by the assessment of the patient's ability to pay, rather than by the dentist's clinical judgment.

Mr. John MacKay: No.

Rating Reform

39. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has so far received in response to the Government's Green Paper on rating reform.

Mr. Ancram: Well in excess of 100 representations have already been received from individuals and organisations. The Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) invited comment by a closing date of 31 July 1986 and I look forward to receiving detailed responses as soon as possible from a wide range of Scottish interests.

Mr. Pollock asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the National Federation of Self-Employed to discuss current proposals for reform of the rating system in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I met representatives of the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses Ltd. on Friday 14 March. Discussion covered the proposals for the future of non-domestic rates set out in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714). I explained to the federation representatives that our immediate proposals offered stability in the rate burdens of business ratepayers in Scotland and that in the longer term our business ratepayers need not fear the impact overall of a uniform rate poundage throughout Great Britain for non-domestic property.

Social and Employment Policies

40. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to initiate changes in social and employment policies in Scotland in the light of the conclusion of the report of Dr. Martin Plant asserting a link between unemployment and drug addiction, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: As the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs has recognised, there are many reasons for the increase in drug misuse. The conclusions in Dr. Plant's report do not establish any need to revise the Government's social and economic policies within which a high priority is attached to tackling the problem of drug misuse.

Hospitals

41. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hospitals have been closed in Scotland since 1979; and how much has been spent on hospital capital projects in the same period.

Mr. John MacKay: Since 1979, 27 hospitals have been closed. Capital expenditure on the hospital and community health services in Scotland since 1979-80 has amounted to £614 million. Of this sum, it is estimated that around £402 million has been taken up in the construction of new hospitals and in the upgrading of existing hospital buildings.

Agricultural Research and Development

42. **Sir Russell Johnston** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has had in support of the Government's proposals to make changes in the system of agricultural research and development in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Our strategy for agricultural research and development was set out in a paper issued in December 1985, following consideration of a consultative document issued in May 1985. Comments on the paper were not specifically invited, although most of the reaction reported to officials of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland has been favourable. Only the proposals related to the new Macaulay institute have proved contentious, and most of the comments made on that have been concerned with the proposed location rather than the remit, which has been widely welcomed.

Housing (Capital Allocations)

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide the housing revenue account capital allocation for each local authority in Scotland for the years 1974-75 to 1985-86 inclusive, all figures at 1985-86 outturn prices.

Mr. Ancram: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will provide the housing revenue account capital allocation and non-housing revenue account capital allocation for Scotland for the years 1974-75 to 1985-86 inclusive, at 1985-86 outturn prices;

(2) if he will provide the capital allocation for the Scottish Special Housing Association for the years 1974-75 to 1985-86 inclusive, all figures at 1985-86 outturn prices;

(3) if he will provide the capital allocation to the Housing Corporation in Scotland for the years 1974-75 to 1985-86 inclusive, all figures at 1985-86 outturn prices.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is set out in the following table:

Year	Housing Revenue Account £ million	Non-Housing Revenue Account £ million	Scottish Special Housing Association £ million	Housing Corporation in Scotland £ million
1974-75	n/a	n/a	n/a	15·2
1975-76	n/a	n/a	n/a	28·5
1976-77	n/a	n/a	n/a	38·8
1977-78	n/a	n/a	n/a	56·6
1978-79	408·8	94·3	n/a	59·3
1979-80	372·5	78·5	64·6	78·3
1980-81	315·0	80·7	57·1	86·3
1981-82	309·2	95·2	56·5	105·1
1982-83	323·0	123·1	57·8	125·3
1983-84	343·2	108·4	55·3	121·2
1984-85	260·6	182·4	53·0	107·4
1985-86	*287·0	*127·4	50·0	102·4

Notes:

1. All figures are expressed in constant prices by applying the GDP deflator (base year 1985-86).
2. Local authorities did not receive annual block capital allocations for the Housing Revenue Account and the non-Housing Revenue Account until 1978-79. Similarly the Scottish Special Housing Association did not receive an annual allocation until 1979-80.
3. The figures given may not correspond exactly to the public expenditure outturn for each year under these various headings because there may have been overspending or underspending of allocations.
4. Capital allocations to local authorities have, since 1982-83, been made on a net basis: the Secretary of State provides a net allocation in addition to which local authorities can spend the actual net capital receipts realised in the year in question. However, the figures for 1982-83 and subsequent years are given on a gross basis, that is, inclusive of actual net capital receipts or, for 1985-86, estimates of actual receipts. The split between the Housing Revenue Account and non Housing Revenue Account might also change in 1985-86 because local authorities have a measure of flexibility between the two blocks. The Housing Revenue Account and non-Housing Revenue Account figures for 1985-86 (marked *) are estimates for both these reasons.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide the capital allocation to the new town development corporations in Scotland for the years 1974-75 to 1985-86 inclusive, all figures at 1985-86 outturn prices.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The corporations are given two separate capital allocations: housing and other environmental services. Figures for both are given in the following table:

	£ million	
	Housing	Other Environmental Services
1974-75	N/A	N/A
1975-76	N/A	N/A
1976-77	93·9	48·7
1977-78	81·2	39·0
1978-79	77·2	42·5
1979-80	63·6	24·9
1980-81	51·1	40·4
1981-82	45·2	46·4
1982-83	29·8	39·0
1983-84	22·7	38·0
1984-85	26·9	37·3
1985-86	21·1	32·0

Notes

1. Figures are given in constant prices by applying the GDP deflator base year 1985-86.
2. Figures for capital allocations to new towns in 1974-75 and 1975-76 are not available.
3. All figures are gross, ie inclusive of net receipts.

Scottish Special Housing Association

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide the total level of expenditure by the Scottish Special Housing Association from its housing revenue account on loan charges, management, repairs and maintenance and other expenditure for the years 1978-79 to 1985-86 inclusive.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

£ million

	Loan charges	Management‡	Repairs and maintenance†	Other expenditure
1978-79	33·6	3·3	15·5	1·0
1979-80	35·7	4·0	16·8	1·2
1980-81	40·4	4·9	14·7	4·6
1981-82	45·9	5·0	18·5	0·9
1982-83	50·8	5·2	21·5	1·9
1983-84	54·8	6·6	18·8	1·7
1984-85	58·4	5·6	19·4	2·2
1985-86*	61·8	7·0	18·9	1·8

* Estimate.
† Includes modernisation up to 1980-81.
‡ Includes rent rebate administration up to 1982-83.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide the total level of income to the Scottish Special Housing Association's housing revenue account from rents, Government deficit grant and other income for the years 1978-79 to 1985-86 inclusive.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

	Rents	Deficit subsidy	other income
			£ million
1978-79	23·3	29·5	0·5
1979-80	26·5	31·1	0·5
1980-81	33·5	30·6	1·1
1981-82	42·2	26·6	2·7
1982-83	51·8	25·2	3·0
1983-84	56·9	23·0	2·7
1984-85	60·0	23·0	2·6
1985-86*	63·9	23·0	2·6

* Estimate

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide the level of expenditure spent on repairs and maintenance per house by the Scottish Special Housing Association from its housing revenue account for the years 1978-79 to 1985-86 inclusive *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* in constant 1985-86 out-turn prices.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

	(a) Cash	*(b)* Constant prices* £ million
1978-79	171·8	324·2
1979-80	182·2	294·2
1980-81	158·3	215·2
1981-82	199·4	246·5
1982-83	233·5	269·7
1983-84	206·7	228·5
1984-85	213·0	225·8
1985-86†	219·8	219·8

* The figures were produced by applying the GDP deflator (base year 1985-86).
† Estimate

Housing (Waiting Lists)

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of people on district council housing waiting lists in each district in Scotland at 31 March in each of the years from 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Ancram: The information available centrally is neither complete nor compiled on a uniform basis. I must therefore refer the hon. Member directly to the local authorities in which he is interested.

Health Boards

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the indicative allocations of support finance to each health board for 1986-87, expressing such allocations also in terms of *(a)* new projects and *(b)* commitment to existing projects.

Mr. John MacKay: The Scottish Home and Health Department notified health boards on 7 March of the indicative levels of expenditure for support finance for 1986-87. Details for each board are shown in the table. Remaining expenditure on projects adopted on or before 30 April 1985 is met from central funds. Expenditure on projects adopted since 30 April 1985 and on new projects is met from health boards' overall allocations. The levels of expenditure notified to health boards on 7 March are considered desirable in the light of the boards' population and financial allocations. They show an increase of 4·5 per cent. over equivalent levels for 1985-86.

Health Board	*Commitments Arising from Projects Approved on or Prior to 30 April 1985*	*Expenditure on New Projects and Projects Adopted after 30 April 1985*	*Total Indicative Expenditure*
	£	£	£
Argyll and Clyde	Nil	284,000	284,000
Ayrshire and Arran	Nil	237,000	237,000
Borders	120,000	70,000	190,000
Dumfries and Galloway	256,000	98,000	354,000
Fife	124,000	207,000	331,000
Forth Valley	309,000	164,000	473,000
Grampian	230,000	292,000	522,000
Greater Glasgow	162,000	670,000	832,000
Highland	1,208,000	133,000	1,341,000
Lanarkshire	113,000	327,000	440,000
Lothian	30,000	451,000	481,000
Orkney	2,000	13,000	15,000
Shetland	Nil	16,000	16,000
Tayside	143,000	253,000	396,000
Western Isles	158,000	25,000	183,000
All Scotland	2,855,000	3,240,000	6,095,000

Prison Population

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current prison population in Scottish prisons; and how this compares with each of the past 10 years.

Mr. John MacKay: The number of inmates in Scottish penal establishments on 11 March 1986 was 5,767. Comparative figures for each of the past 10 years are as follows:

	Number
12 March 1985	5,337
13 March 1984	5,013
15 March 1983	5,324
16 March 1982	4,855
17 March 1981	4,917
17 March 1980	5,142
13 March 1979	4,477
14 March 1978	5,143
15 March 1977	4,945
16 March 1976	5,145

Manufacturing Employment

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many manufacturing jobs have been lost in Scotland in each of the past six years.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The number of employees in employment in manufacturing in Scotland is estimated to have declined as shown in the table.

Fall in number of employees in employment in manufacturing

Year ended September	Number
1980	54,000
1981	48,000
1982	30,000
1983	*27,000
1984	*9,000
1985	*4,000

* Provisional.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many manufacturing jobs have been created in Scotland so far in the current year; and how many have been created in Scotland in each of the past six years.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Comprehensive estimates of job creation in manufacturing industries in Scotland are not available. New jobs associated with offers of regional selective assistance (RSA) to manufacturing firms in Scotland in the current year and for each of the six past calendar years are given in the table. These are in addition to offers of RSA which have been made to safeguard existing employment in Scotland.

Year	Number of new jobs
1986*	945
1985	11,268
1984	12,615
1983	10,159
1982	9,475
1981	10,195
1980	13,487

* To end February.

Agricultural Employment

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs in the agricultural sector have been lost in Scotland in each of the past six years.

Mr. John MacKay: The June agricultural census provides each year a count of workers on Scottish farms. The net changes in regularly employed labour for the last six years are as follows:

	Full-time regular labour	Part-time regular labour
1979-80	−784	−72
1980-81	−1,843	−309
1981-82	−39	−255
1982-83	−406	−147
1983-84	−1,040	−170
1984-85	−541	+47

Crimes of Violence

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many crimes of violence have taken place in Scotland in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Teachers (Pay and Conditions of Service)

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will now announce the names of the persons appointed to the committee of inquiry into the pay, conditions of service and management of the teaching profession in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: I have appointed the following five persons to form the committee:

Sir Peter Main (chairman), formerly chairman, The Boots Co plc, member of Scottish Development Agency

Professor Christopher Blake, Bonar professor of applied economics, University of Dundee

Sister Maire T. Gallagher, headteacher, Notre Dame high school, Dumbarton

James S. Gordon CBE, managing director, Radio Clyde

Robert G.E. Peggie CBE, chief executive (until 31 March 1986), Lothian regional council

The Committee will begin its work immediately. As I told the House on Thursday 6 March, I have asked it to report by the end of the summer.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people have applied for, and how many have been granted, exceptionally severe weather payments during the current winter by each local office of his Department in the Greater London area.

Mr. Newton: Separate information is not collected on the number of claims. Information on payments awarded is not yet available, as I explained in my reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 24 February at column *470*.

Invalidity Pension

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services for each quarter since January 1980 and for each Department of Health and Social Security region, how many people in receipt of invalidity pension have had their cases reviewed; and how many such reviews resulted in the payment of invalidity pension ceasing.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind, perhaps he would write to me.

Yorkshire Health Authorities, (Chairman)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will identify the chairmen of the district health authorities in the Yorkshire regional health authorities appointed or re-appointed from April; if he will state their age on appointment; and what salary or emolument they receive annually for their duties.

Mr. Hayhoe: Health authority chairmen are not paid a salary but are entitled to receive an honorarium of £10,326 a year or to claim financial loss allowance. They may also claim travel and subsistance allowances. The other information requested on those appointed or reappointed to serve as district health authority chairmen within the Yorkshire regional health authority from 1 April is as follows:

District	Chairman (age)
Airedale	D.Hanson (61)
Bradford	J. Royston-Moore (64)
Calderdale	A. Templeton (53)

District	Chairman (age)
Dewsbury	I. F. Pattison (42)
Grimsby	R. Blair (60)
Huddersfield	P. E. Wood (56)
Leeds Western	J. O. Arnold (57)
Northallerton	Very Rev. B. Omerod (49)
Pontefract	Co. R. Widdowson (50)
Scarborough	R. F. Hinton (54)
Scunthorpe	J. P. Mason (45)
Wakefield	Sir Jack Smart (65)

Mr. L. H. Hulley

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will investigate the reason why the Department of Health and Social Security records division at Newcastle upon Tyne has not yet replied to a letter dated 22 January from Mr. L. H. Hulley of 48 Burnthill Lane, Rugeley requesting details of contributions paid from April 1974 to April 1977.

Mr. Major: It is the responsibility of DHSS local office staff to deal with inquiries of this nature. The letter dated 22 January was received by DHSS records branch Newcastle on 24 January and forwarded to the DHSS local office at Cannock to answer. After inquiries were made a reply was issued on 18 March 1986.

Family Credit

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has made of the extra cost to employers of paying family credit to their employees.

Mr. Newton: It is not practicable to estimate any extra administrative costs for employers since they will cope differently with the payments depending on their payroll arrangements, and because the number of employees involved will vary. Many employers will have no family credit recipients amongst their employees. We have undertaken to keep the payment procedures as simple as possible for employers, and thereby keep any extra work to a minimum. We shall be consulting further with employers' organisations and others about the details.

Health Authorities

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* women and *(b)* men serve on (i) regional health authorities and (ii) district health authorities at the latest available date.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that I cannot give the hon. Member all the information he seeks. Some of it is not held centrally. District health authority members are appointed by the appropriate regional health authority and relevant local authorities. The hon. Member may therefore wish to seek this information from the chairman of the regional health authority concerned. Of the current regional health authority members 168 are men and 57 are women.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the numbers of district health authority chairmen and chairwomen who wished to continue in office but who were not re-appointed in each year since 1979, together with their length of service.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 March 1986, c. *567*]: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 17 March at columns *57-58*.

Adult Training Centres

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many adult training centre places per 100,000 population were provided by each local authority during each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: The information available is of adult training centre places per 1,000 population aged 16 to 64 for each local authority, which is published in "Adult Training Centres for the Mentally Handicapped and Day Centres for the Mentally Ill—England", copies of which are in the Library.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many mentally handicapped people, and of what age, have attended adult training centres or social education centres for each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested has not been collected centrally since 1980. Information up to that date was published in "Adult Training Centres for the Mentally Handicapped and Day Centres for the Mentally Ill, the Elderly and the Younger Physically Handicapped — England", copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many mentally handicapped people have requested places in adult training centres or social education centres by region during each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: The information is not available centrally.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many mentally handicapped adults have been discharged permanently from long-stay mental handicap hospitals and units during each of the last five years for which figures are available;

(2) how many mentally handicapped children have been discharged permanently from long-stay hospitals and units during each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: Statistics of the total number of discharges (including transfers) of adults and children from mental handicap hospitals and units are available in the series of DHSS booklets "Mental Health Statistics for England", copies of which are in the Library. Discharges cannot usually be identified as permanent at the time they take place. Specialist units provide an important service for mentally handicapped people, in terms of short-term care, including planned respite care, and assessment of needs and development of programmes. The large number of short stays in such units is reflected in the figures.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many mentally handicapped children were living in local authority hostels and homes, private

hostels and homes and those run by voluntary organisations during each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: The information available centrally relates to the numbers of mentally handicapped children who are supported by local authorities in hostels and homes run by the local authorities or by private or voluntary organisations. This information and that of number of places is published in "Homes and Hostels for the Mentally Ill and Mentally Handicapped—England". Copies of the publication are available in the Library.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services for how many mentally handicapped people his Department has issued guardianship orders during each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: Guardianship orders are issued by local authority social services departments and the number of new guardianship orders issued for mentally handicapped people in England for each of the last five years for which figures are available are given in the table.

New guardianship orders during the year ending 31 March

Year	*Mentally handicapped**
1981	38
1982	27
1983	24
1984	28
1985	33

* The term mental impairment has been used since 1983.

Nurses

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many qualified state enrolled nurses and state registered nurses were trained in the private sector in each year since 1979.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

NHS (Staff Superannuation)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each year since 1979 the total employers' contribution made towards the superannuation of *(a)* consultants and *(b)* other medical staff in the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that details of employers' superannuation contributions attributable to individual staff groups are not available centrally.

Health Authorities (Competitive Tendering)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will place in the Library the returns submitted by health authorities giving their estimates of the savings made following competitive tendering exercises;

(2) what information health authorities make known to his Department about the results of competitive tendering exercises beyond the service tendered, the hospital concerned, the successful tenderer and the estimated saving, respectively.

Mr. Whitney: The quarterly reports from regional health authorities contain details of tendering exercises, including the previous annual costs and percentages saved and progress on tendering achieved by each district. It has been our practice to make available information on progress made and savings achieved, based on these reports. I am unable to agree to placing the full reports in the Library because they contain confidential management and commercial information.

Association of Carers

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what grants he is making to the Association of Carers for the financial years 1985-86 and 1987-88.

Mr. Whitney: The Department has awarded a three-year grant to the Association of Carers amounting to £25,000 for each of the three years 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88 as a contribution towards its central adminstrative costs.

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the Association of Carers was informed of its grant allocation for the financial year 1985-86.

Mr. Whitney: The letter informing the Association of Carers of the award of the grant for 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88 was issued on 14 March. Three interim payments of £5,000 each were made in May, September and December 1985.

Institute of Medical Laboratory Sciences

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what changes are to be made to the Whitley council regulations following the restructuring of membership grades by the Institute of Medical Laboratory Sciences.

Mr. Whitney: I understand that the Institute of Medical Laboratory Sciences has reached no decision on changes in its membership structure.

Mr. J. Edwards

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the reasons why the war pension case of Mr. J. Edwards of Stoke on Trent, which was referred to his Department in October 1985, has not yet been resolved.

Mr. Major: On 27 January 1986 Mr. Edwards and the Department made a joint application to the president of the pensions appeal tribunals for the decision of the tribunal in Mr. Edwards' case to be set aside. The president advised Mr. Edwards and the Department of his decision on 6 February 1986. There is no further action for the Department to take in this matter.

Cystic Fibrosis

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many babies have been born with cystic fibrosis in England and Wales in each of the last five years; and what research projects have been financed by his Department to detect the gene responsible for this disease.

Mr. Whitney: Information is not collected centrally on the number of sufferers from cystic fibrosis, which occurs about once in every 2,000 live births. The Department is

not currently funding any research in this area. I understand that the Medical Research Council is supporting research relevant to the detection of the gene responsible for this disease.

War Pensions

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many second world war ex-service men have, during the last five years, had their pensions backdated resulting from new discoveries as to the cause of injuries suffered during their active service in 1939-45; how far they have been backdated; and how much Second World War ex-service men currently receive as a war pension for damage to eyes.

Mr. Major: The information about backdated pensions is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The amount of war pension for damage to eyes depends upon the extent of the damage. The current pension for loss of vision of one eye, without complications or disfigurement and the other being normal, is £18·75 a week. Pension for total loss of sight is £62·50 a week. Supplementary war pension allowances may be payable in addition to these amounts.

AIDS

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from the Terrence Higgins Trust about the newspaper advertisements which his Department has made on acquired immune deficiency syndrome and if he intends to amend the information contained in these advertisements as a result of such representations.

Mr. Hayhoe: None.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of the number of staff now involved in seeing that employers are operating correctly the statutory sick pay scheme.

Mr. Major: Manpower equivalent to 741 full-time posts is currently provided within local office complements for the monitoring of the statutory sick pay scheme.

Skoal Bandits

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any voluntary agreement has been reached with United States Tobacco for the incorporation of a health warning on the packaging and promotional material of Skoal Bandits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: No. My hon. Friend will, however, be aware that we are supporting the Bill currently passing through the House which seeks to make it illegal to sell Skoal Bandits to children under 16 years of age.

Dr. A. J. Blowers

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will reappoint Dr. A. J. Blowers for a further term of office as chairman of the West Surrey and North-East Hampshire district health authority.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 February 1986, c. *369*]: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amery) on 17 March at columns *57-58*.

Venereal Diseases

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what statistics are available to him as to the national incidence of venereal diseases amongst persons aged between 15 and 20 years of age, and what trend do they show;

(2) what is the current trend of the nation-wide incidence of venereal diseases.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1986, c. *217-18*]: I regret that I cannot give the hon. Member all the information that he seeks. Information by age group is collected centrally only for primary and secondary syphilis and for post-pubertal gonorrhoea, and is available for the age group 16 to 19. The information is given in the table. Trends in the numbers of new cases from 1973 to 1983 have been published in "Statistical Bulletin 3/85", a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Sexually transmitted diseases—new cases per 100,000 population by age seen at National Health Service hospital clinics in England*

	1980			*1981*			*1982*			*1983*			*1984*		
	Male	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Early syphilis															
All cases*	15·31	2·77	9·08	13·85	2·50	8·21	12·89	2·47	7·71	12·23	1·53	6·92	10·40	1·62	6·05
Primary and Secondary only*	9·62	1·51	5·59	9·01	1·40	5·23	8·48	1·08	4·81	7·38	0·79	4·11	6·51	0·78	3·67
16-19 years	4·06	3·78	3·91	4·40	2·99	3·71	3·04	1·96	2·52	3·45	1·44	2·47	2·71	1·40	2·07
Late syphilis															
All cases*	6·77	3·54	5·16	6·94	3·10	5·03	6·27	3·01	4·65	6·41	2·96	4·70	5·75	2·52	4·15
Congenital syphilis															
Rate per 1,000 live births	0·193	0·192	0·192	0·195	0·258	0·226	0·192	0·237	0·214	0·128	0·142	0·135	0·081	0·133	0·107
Gonorrhoea (post pubertal)															
All cases*	244·72	147·84	196·59	239·59	135·77	187·99	236·10	138·01	187·36	216·37	128·95	172·95	210·07	127·79	169·24
16-19 years	276·65	420·00	345·53	277·54	393·83	334·44	277·65	390·93	332·84	273·26	381·68	325·89	277·65	392·37	333·51
Chancroid															
All cases*	0·27	0·12	0·20	0·46	0·20	0·33	0·63	0·27	0·45	0·40	0·17	0·29	0·22	*0·06	0·14
*Other sexually transmitted diseases and other conditions**															
Lymphogranuloma venereum	0·16	†0·04	0·10	0·21	0·07	0·14	0·14	0·08	0·11	0·19	†0·06	0·13	0·16	†0·05	0·11
Granuloma inguinale	0·11	†0·03	0·07	0·08	0·10	0·09	0·09	†0·01	0·05	0·10	†0·05	0·08	0·11	†0·03	0·07
Non-specific genital infection	624·15	199·44	413·17	645·18	217·12	432·44	671·62	247·44	460·73	693·92	262·10	479·44	701·65	285·27	495·01
Non-specific genital infection with arthritis	3·68	0·23	1·97	3·92	0·26	2·10	3·40	0·18	1·80	3·15	0·14	1·65	2·87	0·15	1·52

	1980			1981			1982			1983			1984		
	Male	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Trichomoniasis	13·69	136·32	74·61	11·91	134·58	72·87	11·57	134·10	72·46	9·36	122·08	65·34	8·54	111·23	59·50
Candidiasis	66·15	257·53	161·22	68·02	271·52	169·16	73·78	304·30	188·33	78·87	336·75	206·95	85·96	340·24	211·95
Scabies	12·92	3·56	8·27	12·52	2·88	7·73	11·80	2·83	7·35	12·92	2·89	7·84	11·94	2·51	7·26
Public lice (pediculosis pubis)	39·19	18·26	28·79	42·76	19·92	31·41	47·29	22·99	35·22	44·01	20·87	32·51	49·66	22·48	36·17
Herpes simplex	44·17	28·33	36·30	47·50	32·74	40·16	55·80	42·26	49·07	63·10	53·09	59·12	68·14	61·83	65·01
Warts (condylyomata acuminata)	128·79	76·55	101·84	134·72	79·00	107·03	147·45	91·88	119·83	163·67	104·97	135·52	189·69	122·76	156·47
Molluscum contagiosum	5·39	2·92	4·17	5·23	3·49	4·37	6·34	3·55	4·95	6·94	4·30	5·63	8·67	5·00	6·85
Other treponemal diseases	4·09	2·57	3·34	3·98	2·33	3·16	3·80	2·18	2·99	3·32	2·00	2·66	3·00	1·67	2·34
Other conditions requiring treatment in a centre	249·59	183·46	216·74	267·10	221·52	244·45	292·07	275·80	283·99	315·23	334·38	324·74	337·20	375·03	355·98
Other conditions not requiring treatment in a centre	480·60	292·59	387·20	498·62	303·03	401·42	525·13	315·47	420·94	547·23	323·06	435·89	541·52	316·10	429·64
Other conditions referred elsewhere	10·61	8·57	9·60	11·11	10·02	10·57	13·02	10·82	11·92	15·84	13·71	14·79	17·64	15·86	16·76

* Population aged 15 to 59.

† Rates based on fewer than 10 events and consequently their reliability as a measure may be affected.

Rotherham Health Authority

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services for what reasons the services of Mr. Vernon Thornes as chairman of the Rotherham health authority are being terminated.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 March 1986, c. *570*]: It would not be proper for me to comment on individual appointments. In making such appointments, however, it is important to bring in some new people to provide fresh insights into the service. The decisions taken not to reappoint some chairmen in no way reflects on them personally or on the genuine and valuable service that they have given over the past four years.

Unemployed Persons (Benefits)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the cost of paying benefits to the unemployed and their dependents, including national insurance, supplementary benefit and housing benefit for each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 March 1986, c. *229-30*]: The estimated cost of benefits paid in respect of unemployment for each year since 1978-79 is as follows:

	£ million
1978-79	1,340
1979-80	1,420
1980-81	2,470
1981-82	3,960
1982-83	4,950
1983-84	5,600
1984-85	6,200
1985-86	6,650

These figures relate to unemployment benefit, supplementary benefit and certificated housing benefit. The figures do not include standard housing benefit or other benefits which can continue to be paid if the recipient finds employment.

Cancer (Aldermaston and Burghfield)

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he expects either the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment or the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to produce their findings about incidences of leukaemia and lymphatic cancer among the under 25-year-olds living in Aldermaston and Burghfield by the end of 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 March 1986, c. *321*]: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) expects to publish its findings from a study of cancer incidence and deaths in the vicinity of nuclear installations in England and Wales by the end of 1986. The study includes an analysis of data on the incidence of leukaemia and lymphatic cancer among the under 25-year-olds living in Bradfield rural district (includes Aldermaston and Burghfield) between 1961 and 1980.

It is too early to predict when the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment will complete its assessment, which will be dependent on the availability of the OPCS findings.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Namibia

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards Namibian independence following the recent United Nations Security Council debate, and on the role of the Contact Group of Nations.

Mrs. Chalker: We remain committed to United Nations Security Council resolution (SCR) 435, the internationally agreed basis for a Namibia settlement, and we support the current negotiations aimed at achieving its implementation.

The Contact Group has no active role at present, but stands ready to help where this would be constructive.

Hong Kong

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent discussions between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the People's Republic of China about progress on matters relating to Hong Kong.

Mr. Renton: The third meeting of the Sino-British Joint Liaison Group took place in Hong Kong from 11 to 14 March. It was a successful meeting. I have arranged for copies of the communiqué to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had recently with the Government of the People's Republic of China about the granting of Chinese citizenship to non-ethnic Chinese citizens of Hong Kong after 1997; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: This is a matter which has been discussed with the Chinese Government in the Joint Liasion Group. They confirmed that non-Chinese who meet the legal

requirements under Chinese nationality law may apply for Chinese nationality, and that such cases would be dealt with by the appropriate authorities.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mrs. Chalker: The usual forecast was deposited in the House today. At present eight formal and one informal meeting of the Council are scheduled for April 1986.

At the informal meeting of Finance Ministers on 5-6 April Ministers will be invited to take a decision on a Community mandate for discussion in the OECD consensus group of further improvements in discipline in the use of tied aid credits for developing countries.

The Research Council will meet on 8 April. Initial consideration will be given to the 1987 to 1991 framework programme for research and development in the field of science and technology. The Council will also consider the financial aspects of and future guidelines for the European Community's joint research centre. The Council will also prepare for a conciliation procedure with the European Parliament on research and development programmes in the fields of environment and materials.

The Council will consider a report by industrialists on ESPRIT (European Strategic Programme for Research and Development in Information Technology). This follows the requirement of a Council decision of February 1984 that a report of ESPRIT should be submitted to the Council at the halfway stage.

The Internal Market Council, also meeting on 8 April, will continue its work on the action programme for completion of the common market. The Consumer Affairs Council will meet on the same day. It will consider a resolution on the future orientation of EC policy for the protection and promotion of the interests of consumers and take note of progress in discussions on the consumer credit directive which seeks to achieve minimum standards of protection for consumers in credit transactions.

The Council will be invited to take note of progress made to date on the Commission's 1984 proposal to extend price indications and to discuss the future direction of work. The Council is expected to adopt a Community system of information on accidents involving consumer products.

The Development Council on 17 April will consider the structural aspects of development in Africa (including the Community's rehabilitation plan and the fight against desertification), food aid and food security in developing countries, the role of women in development and the promotion of developing countries' trade.

The Foreign Affairs Council meeting on 21 and 22 April will discuss preparations for the proposed new round of trade negotiations in the GATT and may also review the Community's trade relations with the United States of America. It will review progress in negotiations with Mediterranean partners on the adaptation of their co-operation-association agreements and may also consider a number of outstanding issues in preparation for an EC-Turkey Association Council in the autumn. The Council may review progress in negotiations with the ACP states on the guaranteed price for ACP sugar in 1985-86.

On 21 and 22 April the Agricultural Council is expected to consider the 1986 agriculture price proposals. The Council may also discuss pesticide residues and a prohibition directive on ethylene oxide.

The ACP-EEC Council will meet in Barbados on 24 and 25 April to consider ACP-EEC trade and aid issues arising in the context of the Lomé convention.

The Economic and Finance Council is expected to meet on 28 April to establish the budget reference framework for 1987 and to consider a report from the high level working party on tax approximation.

British Embassy, Japan

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what promotion efforts for British goods and services are made by the British embassy in Japan.

Mrs. Chalker: Her Majesty's embassy in Tokyo, and the British consulate-general in Osaka are actively involved in providing the normal range of export promotion services to help United Kingdom firms to establish themselves in the Japanese market. Special promotional activities in 1985 included support for 18 outward missions, for joint venture participations at 13 trade fairs and exhibitions, and for specialised store promotions in 25 branches of seven different department stores. To promote the interests of the services sector Her Majesty's embassy has on its staff a senior officer seconded from the Bank of England.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many staff in the British embassy in Japan deal specifically with commercial matters.

Mr. Eggar: Seven UK-based and 20 locally-engaged members of Her Majesty's embassy in Tokyo as well as two UK-based and seven locally-engaged members of the consulate-general in Osaka deal specifically with commercial matters. In addition, Her Majesty's ambassador devotes a considerable amount of his time to commercial work.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the annual cost of the British embassy in Japan.

Mr. Eggar: Excluding FCO headquarters overheads, the cost of the British missions in Japan was:

	£ million	
	1983-84	*1984-85*
HBM embassy Tokyo	5·2	5·9
Consulate-General Osaka	0·5	0·7

NORTHERN IRELAND

Education and Library Boards

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what budget cuts are faced by each Northern Ireland education and library board in 1986-87.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. The total recurrent budget available for area boards in 1986-87 is £216 million—an increase of 5·5 per cent.

Housing Executive

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) why the Housing Executive has cut planned housing starts for 1986-87 from 1,000 to 850;

(2) why the Housing Executive has cut planned improvement schemes for 1,200 to 400.

Mr. Boyson: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive but I understand from the chairman that the figures quoted refer to the executive's programme proposals for the Belfast city council area published in draft during February. The Housing Executive is planning its activities in 1986-87 within the total resources available to it. Public expenditure on housing in Northern Ireland in 1986-87 will continue to be at a proportionally higher level than elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Day of Protest

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the report of the Chief Constable on Royal Ulster Constabulary conduct during the day of protest on 3 March will be made public.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend recently received a detailed and confidential report from the Chief Constable on the policing aspects of the protest on 3 March, including the Royal Ulster Constabulary's manpower commitments on the day. It is not proposed to publish this document.

Rates

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he intends to take any legal action against Northern Ireland councillors who have refused to strike a rate.

Mr. Needham: It will be for the local government auditor in each of the district council areas in question to consider what action, if any, should be taken.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has on how much revenue has been lost due to the failure of various Northern Ireland councils to strike a rate.

Mr. Needham: As the rate to be struck is for the financial year 1986-87 no revenue has as yet been lost.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement about the implementation of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Mr. Tom King: A further meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference took place in Belfast on 11 March. It was useful and constructive and I gave a press conference afterwards. The issues discussed are set out in the joint statement issued after the meeting which I have placed in the Library.

Housing Executive

Dr. Michael Clark asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will lay the latest accounts for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive before Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The accounts of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for 1984-85 together with the reports of the Local Government Auditor and of the Comptroller and Auditor-General thereon were laid today (Cmnd. 9757). The matters raised have been discussed between the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland and the Housing Executive and the agreed follow-up action will be monitored. On this occasion the report is generally encouraging, but it also identifies some weaknesses in systems both in housing benefit administration and contracts procedures.

I have arranged for copies of a statement by the Housing Executive in response to the Local Government Auditor's report to be placed in the Library of the House.

Gosford Castle Hotel

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what grant was paid to the properties of Gosford Castle hotel, Markethill, County Armagh; if this hotel is still operational; and if he will make a statement on the present status of the grant to this hotel.

Dr. Boyson: Between 1983 and 1985 historic buildings grant amounting to £34,797 has been paid in respect of repairs to Gosford Castle which has since ceased to be operated as a hotel. Further payment of grant is dependent upon satisfactory completion of approved works.

Russell Court Hotel

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what grants were paid to the Semi-State Authority from the Republic of Ireland to develop the Russell Court hotel, Lisburn road, Belfast; and if he will make a statement on the status of this grant now that this hotel is closed.

Dr. Boyson: Grants totalling £587,000 were paid to the Russell Court Hotel Limited during 1971-1973. When the building was sold for non-hotel purposes, the Department of Economic Development recovered £48,942 under the terms of the grant offer.

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many staff are now employed in the secretariat to the Anglo-Irish Conference at Maryfield, Belfast; what is the total estimated cost of its operation during the first three months since it commenced work; and on what basis the respective proportions of these costs will be contributed, respectively, by the Northern Ireland Office and the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Scott: The United Kingdom side of the secretariat currently has nine staff, including support staff. The number of staff on the Irish side is a matter for the Irish Government.

The estimated running costs up to 9 March 1986 were £109,600. The costs of the secretariat will be shared by the two Governments. The basis of the apportionment of costs has not yet been determined.

Tobacco Industry

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many workers were employed in the tobacco industry in Northern Ireland in June 1979; and how many at the latest available date.

Dr. Boyson [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 March 1986, c. *439*]: The number of employees in the tobacco industry is as follows:

	Number
June 1979	6,129
December 1985	4,215

These figures relate to producers with more than 25 employees.

DEFENCE

Departmental Supplies

Mr. Ottaway asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average time it takes his Department to pay suppliers of goods and services to his Department.

Mr. Lee: The average time taken to pay suppliers of goods or services to my Department is four to six weeks, from delivery to payment.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether permission was sought from Her Majesty's Government by the United States of America to discuss the contents of the memorandum of understanding at a strategic defence initiative office seminar on 25 March.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have nothing to add to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

NATIONAL FINANCE

General Practitioners (Expenses)

Mr. Dobson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give for each year since 1979 the total tax allowances given for the expenses of general practitioners; breaking the figures down by type of expense.

Mr. Moore: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Family Income

Mr. Frank Field asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will present in tabular form data for the financial years 1978-79 and 1986-87 on *(a)* the tax threshold for (i) a single person, (ii) a married couple and (iii) a married couple with two children and *(b)* the eligibility for supplementary benefit for each of these groups taking the latest data on average housing costs and assuming for the two child family one child is above and one below the age of 11 years; and what is the eligibility for family income supplement for a family with two children.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Finance Bill

Mr. Yeo asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Finance Bill will be published.

Mr. MacGregor: The Finance Bill will be published on Wednesday 16 April.

Drugs Smuggling

Mr. McCrindle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will review the level of Customs and Excise manpower available at airports and seaports to carry out drug searches and seizures in the British Isles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1986]: The level of Customs and Excise manpower is kept under constant review. The Government give a very high priority to the fight against drugs smuggling, and there has been a large increase in the number of Customs preventive officers, whose main priority is drugs detection. At 31 March 1986 it is estimated that there will be 3,000 preventive officers compared with 2,721 two years earlier; and a further 300 preventive officers will be appointed during the course of 1986-87. Additionally, the number of specialist drugs investigators has more than doubled since 1979, from 121 to 262 (estimated) at 31 March 1986; and a further 35 are to be added in 1986-87.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the percentage of passengers at airports and seaports in the British Isles who are checked on a random basis for the possession of drugs.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1986]: The preventive checks made upon incoming passengers at airports and seaports are to detect the illegal importation of a wide range of goods including, for example, those liable to Customs and Excise duties, prohibited animals, firearms and drugs.

The percentage of passengers checked varies from place to place and from time to time and it is not possible therefore to give a reliable estimate of the overall figure.

Income Tax

Mr. Straw asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing *(a)* the proportion in percentage terms, *(b)* the amount in current prices and *(c)* the amount in constant 1985-86 prices of personal income taken by taxation and rates for the year 1986-87, taking account of any changes announced in his Budget statement and any previously announced changes, and for each of the years 1978-79, 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86 for each level of average earnings, each category of taxpayer, and each category of taxation and rates, in the manner of the answers of 3 April 1985, *Official Report*, column *676*, and of 2 July 1985, *Official Report*, column *112*.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 March 1986]: Figures for all the years requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Figures for the years 1984-85 to 1986-87 are in the table.

50 per cent. of average earnings

	Single			Married couple no children			Married both working			Married couple with two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1984-85												
(a) Income tax	16·18	17·14	17·5	9·55	10·11	10·3	0·00	0·00	0·0	9·55	10·11	9·0
(b) NIC	8·32	8·82	9·0	8·32	8·82	9·0	8·32	8·82	9·0	8·32	8·82	7·9
(c) (a) plus *(b)*	24·51	25·95	26·5	17·87	18·93	19·3	8·32	8·82	9·0	17·87	18·93	16·9
1985-86												
(a) Income tax	17·25	17·25	17·3	10·04	10·04	10·0	0·00	0·00	0·0	10·04	10·04	8·8
(b) NIC	8·99	8·99	9·0	8·99	8·99	9·0	7·59	7·59	7·6	8·99	8·99	7·9
(c) (a) plus *(b)*	26·24	26·24	26·3	19·03	19·03	19·0	7·59	7·59	7·6	19·03	19·03	16·7
1986-87												
(a) Income tax	17·98	17·37	16·8	10·62	10·26	9·9	0·00	0·00	0·0	10·62	10·26	8·8
(b) NIC	9·62	9·30	9·0	9·62	9·30	9·0	6·63	6·40	6·2	9·62	9·30	7·9
(c) (a) plus *(b)*	27·60	26·67	25·8	20·24	19·55	18·9	6·63	6·40	6·2	20·24	19·55	16·7

75 per cent. of average earnings

	Single			Married couple no children			Married both working			Married couple with two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1984-85												
(a) Income tax	30·06	31·83	21·7	23·42	24·80	16·9	11·86	12·55	8·5	23·42	24·80	15·4
(b) NIC	12·49	13·22	9·0	12·49	13·22	9·0	12·49	13·22	9·0	12·49	13·22	8·2
(c) VAT	6·03	6·39	4·3	5·44	5·76	3·9	6·82	7·22	4·9	6·05	6·41	4·0
(d) Other indirect	11·16	11·82	8·0	13·15	13·93	9·5	16·16	17·11	11·6	13·26	14·04	8·7
(e) (a) plus *(b)* plus *(c)* plus *(d)*	59·74	63·26	43·1	54·50	57·71	39·3	47·33	50·12	34·1	55·22	58·47	36·3
(f) Domestic rates	5·19	5·50	3·7	5·20	5·5	3·7	5·91	6·26	4·3	5·23	5·54	3·4
(g) (e) plus *(f)*	64·93	68·76	46·8	59·70	63·22	43·0	53·24	56·38	38·4	60·45	64·01	39·8
1985-86												
(a) Income tax	32·23	32·23	21·5	25·02	25·02	16·7	12·30	12·30	8·2	25·02	25·02	15·3
(b) NIC	13·49	13·49	9·0	13·49	13·49	9·0	11·99	11·99	8·0	13·49	13·49	8·2
(c) VAT	6·72	6·72	4·5	6·05	6·05	4·0	7·75	7·75	5·2	6·68	6·68	4·1
(d) Other indirect	11·73	11·73	7·8	13·84	13·84	9·2	17·26	17·26	11·5	13·91	13·91	8·5
(e) (a) plus *(b)* plus *(c)* plus *(d)*	64·17	64·17	42·8	58·40	58·40	39·0	49·30	49·30	32·9	59·10	59·10	36·1
(f) Domestic rates	5·55	5·55	3·7	5·57	5·57	3·7	6·36	6·36	4·2	5·58	5·58	3·4
(g) (e) plus *(f)*	69·72	69·72	46·5	63·97	63·97	42·7	55·66	55·66	37·1	64·68	64·68	39·5
1986-87												
(a) Income tax	33·48	32·35	20·9	26·12	25·23	16·3	13·10	12·65	8·2	26·12	25·23	15·0
(b) NIC	14·43	13·94	9·0	14·43	13·94	9·0	13·15	12·70	8·2	14·43	13·94	8·3
(c) VAT	7·23	6·99	4·5	6·48	6·26	4·0	8·21	7·93	5·1	7·09	6·85	4·1
(d) Other indirect	12·65	12·22	7·9	14·91	14·41	9·3	18·50	17·88	11·5	14·92	14·42	8·6
(e) (a) plus *(b)* plus *(c)* plus *(d)*	67·79	65·50	42·3	61·94	59·85	33·6	52·96	51·17	33·0	62·56	60·44	35·9
(f) Domestic rates	6·31	6·10	3·9	6·32	6·10	3·9	7·21	6·96	4·5	6·30	6·09	3·6
(g) (e) plus *(f)*	74·10	71·59	46·2	68·26	65·95	42·6	60·17	58·14	37·5	68·86	66·53	39·5

100 per cent. of average earnings

	Single			Married couple no children			Married both working			Married couple with two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1984-85												
(a) Income tax	43·92	46·52	23·7	37·30	39·50	20·2	25·73	27·25	13·9	37·30	39·50	18·8
(b) NIC	16·65	17·63	9·0	16·65	17·63	9·0	16·65	17·63	9·0	16·65	17·63	8·4
(c) VAT	8·45	8·95	4·6	7·96	8·43	4·3	9·46	10·02	5·1	8·54	9·05	4·3
(d) Other indirect	14·34	15·19	7·8	15·67	16·60	8·5	18·93	20·05	10·2	15·68	16·60	7·9
(e) (a) plus *(b)* plus *(c)* plus *(d)*	83·37	88·28	45·1	77·58	82·15	41·9	70·77	74·94	38·3	78·17	82·78	39·4
(f) Domestic rates	6·18	6·54	3·3	5·90	6·24	3·2	6·38	6·76	3·5	6·08	6·44	3·1
(g) (e) plus *(f)*	89·55	94·83	48·4	83·48	88·40	45·1	77·15	81·70	41·7	84·25	89·22	42·5
1985-86												
(a) Income tax	47·22	47·22	23·6	40·01	40·01	20·0	27·29	27·29	13·7	40·01	40·01	18·7
(b) NIC	17·98	17·98	9·0	17·98	17·98	9·0	17·18	17·18	8·6	17·98	17·98	8·4
(c) VAT	9·41	9·41	4·7	8·86	8·86	4·4	10·62	10·62	5·3	9·46	9·46	4·4
(d) Other indirect	15·07	15·07	7·5	16·49	16·49	8·3	20·09	20·09	10·1	16·46	16·46	7·7
(e) (a) plus *(b)* plus *(c)* plus *(d)*	89·68	89·68	44·9	83·34	83·34	41·7	75·18	75·18	37·6	83·91	83·91	39·3
(f) Domestic rates	6·60	6·60	3·3	6·31	6·31	3·2	6·85	6·85	3·4	6·49	6·49	3·0
(g) (e) plus *(f)*	96·28	96·28	48·2	89·65	89·65	44·9	82·03	82·03	41·1	90·40	90·40	42·3
1986-87												
(a) Income tax	48·98	47·32	22·9	41·62	40·21	19·5	28·60	27·63	13·4	41·62	40·21	18·3
(b) NIC	19·24	18·59	9·0	19·24	18·59	9·0	17·53	16·94	8·2	19·24	18·59	8·4
(c) VAT	10·15	9·81	4·7	9·53	9·20	4·5	11·44	11·05	5·3	10·10	9·76	4·4
(d) Other indirect	16·29	15·74	7·6	17·83	17·22	8·3	21·71	20·98	10·2	17·72	17·12	7·8

	Single			Married couple no children			Married both working			Married couple with two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income
(e) (a) plus (b) plus (c) plus (d)	94·66	91·46	44·3	88·22	85·24	41·3	79·28	76·60	37·1	88·68	85·68	38·9
(f) Domestic rates	7·51	7·26	3·5	7·16	6·92	3·4	7·79	7·52	3·6	7·34	7·09	3·2
(g) (e) plus (f)	102·17	98·71	47·8	95·38	92·15	44·6	87·07	84·13	40·7	96·02	92·77	42·1

150 per cent. of average earnings

	Single			Married couple no children			Married both working			Married couple with two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1984-85												
(a) Income tax	71·68	75·91	25·8	65·05	68·88	23·4	53·48	56·63	19·3	65·05	68·88	22·4
(b) NIC	22·50	23·83	8·1	22·50	23·83	8·1	24·98	26·45	9·0	22·50	23·83	7·7
(c) VAT	13·50	14·30	4·9	13·23	14·01	4·8	14·74	15·61	5·3	13·75	14·56	4·7
(d) Other indirect	20·99	22·22	7·6	20·94	2·17	7·5	24·48	25·92	8·8	20·73	21·95	7·1
(e) (a) plus (b) plus (c) plus (d)	128·67	136·25	46·4	121·72	128·89	43·9	117·68	124·62	42·4	122·03	129·22	42·0
(f) Domestic rates	8·23	8·72	3·0	7·35	7·78	2·6	7·33	7·76	2·6	7·87	8·33	2·7
(g) (e) plus (f)	136·90	144·97	49·3	129·07	136·68	46·5	125·01	132·38	45·0	129·90	137·56	44·7
1985-86												
(a) Income tax	77·19	77·19	25·8	69·98	69·98	23·3	57·26	57·26	19·1	69·98	69·98	22·3
(b) NIC	23·85	23·85	8·0	23·85	23·85	8·0	26·97	26·97	9·0	23·85	23·85	7·6
(c) VAT	15·07	15·07	5·0	14·76	14·76	4·9	16·43	16·43	5·5	15·30	15·30	4·9
(d) Other indirect	22·10	22·10	7·4	22·09	22·09	7·4	25·81	25·81	8·6	21·83	21·83	7·0
(e) (a) plus (b) plus (c) plus (d)	138·21	138·21	46·1	130·68	130·68	43·6	126·47	126·47	42·2	130·96	130·96	41·8
(f) Domestic rates	8·81	8·81	2·9	7·87	7·87	2·6	7·84	7·84	2·6	8·40	8·40	2·7
(g) (e) plus (f)	147·02	147·02	49·1	138·55	138·55	46·2	134·31	134·31	44·8	139·36	139·36	44·5
1986-87												
(a) Income tax	79·98	77·28	24·9	72·62	70·16	22·6	59·60	57·58	18·6	72·62	70·16	21·7
(b) NIC	25·65	24·78	8·0	25·65	24·78	8·0	28·86	27·89	9·0	25·65	24·78	7·7
(c) VAT	16·28	15·73	5·1	15·91	15·37	5·0	17·65	17·05	5·5	16·41	15·86	4·9
(d) Other indirect	23·92	23·11	7·5	23·94	23·13	7·5	27·89	26·95	8·7	23·57	22·77	7·0
(e) (a) plus (b) plus (c) plus (d)	145·83	140·90	45·5	138·12	133·45	43·1	134·00	129·47	41·8	138·25	133·57	41·3
(f) Domestic rates	'10·04	9·70	3·1	8·94	8·64	2·8	8·90	8·60	2·8	9·53	9·21	2·8
(g) (e) plus (f)	155·87	150·60	48·6	147·06	142·09	45·9	142·90	138·07	44·6	147·78	142·78	44·1

200 per cent. of average earnings

	Single			Married couple no children			Married both working			Married couple with two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1984-85												
(a) Income tax	102·96	109·03	27·8	94·12	99·66	25·4	81·23	86·02	22·0	94·12	99·66	24·6
(b) NIC	22·50	23·83	6·1	22·50	23·83	6·1	33·30	35·26	9·0	22·50	23·83	5·9
(c) (a) plus (b)	125·46	132·86	33·9	116·62	123·49	31·5	114·53	121·28	31·0	116·62	123·49	30·4
1985-86												
(a) Income tax	111·72	111·72	28·0	102·11	102·11	25·6	87·23	87·23	21·8	102·11	102·11	24·7
(b) NIC	23·85	23·85	6·0	23·85	23·85	6·0	35·96	35·96	9·0	23·85	23·85	5·8
(c) (a) plus (b)	135·57	135·57	33·9	125·96	125·96	31·5	123·19	123·19	30·8	125·96	125·96	30·5
1986-87												
(a) Income tax	116·69	112·75	27·3	106·54	102·94	24·9	90·60	87·54	21·2	106·54	102·94	24·1
(b) NIC	25·6	24·78	6·0	25·65	24·78	6·0	38·48	37·18	9·0	25·65	24·78	5·8
(c) (a) plus (b)	142·34	137·53	33·3	132·19	127·72	30·9	129·08	124·72	30·2	132·19	127·72	29·9

500 per cent. of average earnings

	Single			Married couple no children			Married both working			Married couple with two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1984-85												
(a) Income tax	396·48	419·85	42·9	383·21	405·80	41·4	291·86	309·06	31·6	383·21	405·80	40·8
(b) NIC	22·50	23·83	2·4	22·50	23·83	2·4	45·00	47·65	4·9	22·50	23·83	2·4
(c) (a) plus (b)	418·98	443·67	45·3	405·71	429·62	43·9	336·86	356·71	36·4	405·71	429·63	43·2
1985-86												
(a) Income tax	431·17	431·17	43·2	416·75	416·75	41·7	317·15	317·15	31·7	416·75	416·75	41·1
(b) NIC	23·85	23·85	2·4	23·85	23·85	2·4	47·70	47·70	4·8	23·85	23·85	2·4
(c) (a) plus (b)	455·02	455·02	45·5	440·60	440·60	44·1	364·85	364·85	36·5	440·60	440·60	43·5

	Single			Married couple no children			Married both working			Married couple with two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1986-87												
(a) Income tax	462·59	446·95	43·3	447·36	432·24	41·8	334·71	323·39	31·3	447·36	432·24	41·3
(b) NIC	25·65	24·78	2·4	25·65	24·78	2·4	51·30	49·57	4·8	25·65	24·78	2·4
(c) (a) plus (b)	488·24	471·74	45·7	473·01	457·02	44·2	386·01	372·96	36·1	473·01	457·02	43·7

700 per cent. of average earnings

	Single			Married couple no children			Married both working			Married couple with two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1984-85												
(a) Income tax	618·48	654·93	47·8	605·21	640·88	46·7	478·08	506·25	36·9	605·21	640·88	46·3
(b) NIC	22·50	23·83	1·7	22·50	23·83	1·7	45·00	47·65	3·5	22·50	23·83	1·7
(c) (a) plus (b)	640·98	678·76	49·5	627·71	664·71	48·5	523·08	553·90	40·4	627·71	664·71	48·0
1985-86												
(a) Income tax	670·93	670·93	48·0	656·51	656·51	46·9	520·71	520·71	37·2	656·51	656·51	46·5
(b) NIC	23·85	23·85	1·7	23·85	23·85	1·7	47·70	47·70	3·4	23·85	23·85	1·7
(c) (a) plus (b)	694·78	694·78	49·7	680·36	680·36	48·6	568·41	568·41	40·6	680·36	680·36	48·2
1986-87												
(a) Income tax	719·15	694·84	48·1	703·92	680·12	47·0	556·21	537·79	37·2	703·92	680·12	46·6
(b) NIC	25·65	24·78	1·7	25·65	24·78	1·7	51·30	49·57	3·4	25·65	24·78	1·7
(c) (a) plus (b)	744·80	719·62	49·8	729·57	704·91	48·7	607·91	587·35	40·6	729·57	704·90	48·3

1,000 per cent. of average earnings

	Single			Married couple no children			Married both working			Married couple with two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1985-86 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1984-85												
(a) Income tax	951·48	1,007·56	51·4	938·21	993·50	50·7	794·52	841·35	42·9	938·21	993·50	50·4
(b) NIC	22·50	23·83	1·2	22·50	23·83	1·2	45·00	47·65	2·4	22·50	23·83	1·2
(c) (a) plus (b)	973·98	1,031·38	52·6	960·71	1,017·33	51·9	839·52	889·00	45·4	960·71	1,017·33	51·6
1985-86												
(a) Income tax	1,030·57	1,030·57	51·6	1,016·15	1,016·15	50·9	863·15	863·15	43·2	1,016·15	1,016·15	150·5
(b) NIC	23·85	23·85	1·2	23·85	23·85	1·2	47·70	47·70	2·4	23·85	23·85	1·2
(c) (a) plus (b)	1,054·42	1,054·42	52·8	1,040·00	1,040·00	52·1	910·85	910·85	45·6	1,040·00	1,040·00	51·7
1986-87												
(a) Income tax	1,103·99	1,066·67	51·6	1,088·76	1,051·95	50·9	925·18	893·90	43·3	1,088·76	1,051·95	50·6
(b) NIC	25·65	24·78	1·2	25·65	24·78	1·2	51·30	49·57	2·4	25·65	24·78	1·2
(c) (a) plus (b)	1,129·64	1,091·45	52·8	1,114·41	1,076·73	52·1	976·48	943·47	45·7	1114·41	1,076·73	51·8

Notes to Tables

Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that households have no other tax relief apart from the standard allowances. Earners, including working wives, are assumed to pay Class 1 NI contributions at the contracted-in rate. The figures for NI contributions are financial year averages.

2. Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. The levels of average earnings in each year are given below. The figures for 1985-86 and 1986-87 are illustrative and assume growth of 8 and 7 per cent. respectively.

	£ per week
1984-85	185·00
1985-86	*199·80
1986-87	*213·80

* assumption

3. The married couple with both working is assumed to have joint earnings of the various multiples of average earnings. In calculating disposable income it is assumed that the joint earnings are split between husband and wife in the ratio 60:40.

4. For the married couple with two children, the percentage column expresses taxes etc. as percentages of gross earnings plus child benefit. For this purpose, financial year averages are used for child benefit.

5. The estimates of indirect taxes are based on the illustrative assumption that 10 per cent. of disposable income is saved. They are derived from the 1984 family expenditure survey. Estimates cannot reliably be made outside the income range for which figures are shown. There are also quite wide variations in spending patterns between households with similar incomes and compositions and, because of sampling variation, there can be substantial differences between the estimates obtained from different year's family expenditure surveys.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 27 March 1986

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Council of Europe

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what considerations have been given by the EEC Council to EEC participation in the work and activities of the Council of Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The EC Council of Ministers has not discussed this matter recently but there have been useful meetings between representatives of the EC Council and the Council of Europe to improve co-ordination between them.

United States Export Denials List

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what status his Department accords to the use of the United States export denials list in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The United States denied parties list has no status in United Kingdom law. Companies should contact the Department of Trade and Industry if they appear on the list in the course of legitimate trading.

Greece

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Greece.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend had most valuable and wide-ranging discussions with Mr. Papandreou and other Greek Ministers as well as the Leader of the Opposition. These confirmed our friendly bilateral relationship and our interest in trading and industrial collaboration with Greece. It contributed to the sort of understanding vital between NATO and EC partners.

My right hon. and learned Friend stressed the importance of Greece's role in maintaining NATO solidarity on the south-eastern flank and Britain's commitment to good relations with all our Alliance partners. On Cyprus he underlined our support for the Secretary General's initiative. On the EC, he outlined British priorities for our forthcoming presidency.

On Sunday 23 March in the company of Cretan veterans at the Commonwealth war cemetery at Souda bay, my right hon. and learned Friend paid tribute to the British and Commonwealth soldiers who fell in Crete during the second world war.

Conference Costs (Wilton Park, Sussex)

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what finance was made available by his Department for the administration, conference organisation and provision of speakers at Wilton park, Sussex, in the last financial year; and what is his estimate of the cost for 1986-87.

Mr. Eggar: The net cost of the Wilton house conference centre at Steyning, West Sussex, venue for the Wilton park cycle of international conferences is estimated to be £434,160 in 1985-86. The comparable estimated figure for 1986-87 is £441,940.

Military and Security Training

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the military and security training given in the United Kingdom in the last 10 years to personnel from Uganda; and what steps were taken by Her Majesty's Government to seek to ensure that such personnel were not later involved in violation of human rights in Uganda.

Mr. Renton: The information requested by the hon. Member is not available in the precise form requested. However, between 1980 and 1985, 24 Ugandan students received training at military establishments in this country. Since the fall of the Obote regime no Ugandan students have been trained here.

Deployment of students after their training was a matter for the Ugandan authorities. However we have in this period taken every opportunity, at Ministerial and official level, to make known to successive Ugandan Administrations, our grave concern about human rights and to press them to take action to prevent abuses.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the number of countries whose personnel received in the last 10 years military and security training in the United Kingdom; and if he will name the countries concerned.

Mr. Renton: The information requested by the hon. Member is not available in the precise form requested. However, over the past three years personnel from some 89 countries have received training in military establishments in this country. The countries are as follows:

Algeria
Australia
Bahamas
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belgium
Belize
Bermuda
Botswana
Brazil
Brunei
Burma
Canada
Chile
Denmark
Ecuador
Egypt
Eire
Ethiopia
Federal Republic of Germany
Fiji
Finland
France
Gambia
Ghana
Greece
Guyana
Hong Kong

Iceland
India
Indonesia
Iran
Iraq
Israel
Italy
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kenya
Kuwait
Lebanon
Lesotho
Libya
Malawi
Malaysia
Maldives
Malta
Mauritius
Monserrat
Mozambique
Nepal
Netherlands
New Zealand
Nigeria
Norway
Oman
Pakistan
Philippines
Portugal
Qatar
St Kitts
St Lucia
St Vincent
Saudi Arabia
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Singapore
South Korea
Spain
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Swaziland
Sweden
Switzerland
Tanzania
Thailand
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Turkey
Uganda
United Arab Emirates
United States of America
Venezuela
Yemen Arab Republic
Yugoslavia
Zaire
Zambia
Zimbabwe

Records of other miscellaneous types of military assistance are not held centrally on a worldwide basis.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will introduce legislation to ensure that training in military and security matters is not given in the United Kingdom to personnel from countries where it has been demonstrated that human rights abuses occur, and to ensure that military equipment is not exported to those countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No. When considering whether to offer training in the United Kingdom under military training assistance schemes full account is taken of the human rights situation in the country concerned. We would not agree to train people if in our judgment this was likely to contribute to violations of human rights. Similarly in deciding whether or not to grant a licence for the export of defence equipment to a particular country full account is taken of the human rights situation and we would not agree to the supply of any item which in our judgment was likely to be used for internal repression or to violate human rights.

Mr. Colin Moore

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the diplomatic status and employment of Mr. Colin Moore at the United States embassy in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I understand that Mr. Colin Moore, a British national, is employed in the commercial section of the United States embassy. He has not been formally notified to us. He does not have diplomatic status.

Kashmir

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent steps Her Majesty's Government have taken to seek to facilitate implementation of the 1948 United Nation's resolution regarding the disputed territory of Kashmir.

Mr. Eggar: None. The question of Kashmir is one to be decided bilaterally between India and Pakistan.

Turks and Caicos Islands

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in the Turks and Caicos Islands following the burning down of a Government office building on 31 December 1985.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: On new year's eve 1985 certain Government offices in the Turks and Caicos Islands, a United Kingdom dependent territory, were gutted by fire. Arson was suspected and in the light of preliminary investigations carried out by the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands police force, which brought to light evidence suggesting not only arson but a conspiracy to commit this and possible other serious offences, I have decided, in consultation with the Governor of the Islands, that it is necessary, in the interests of the good government of the territory, to set up a commission of inquiry.

The commission will be headed by Mr. Louis Blom-Cooper QC and its terms of reference will be:

(a) to inquire into the alleged arson of Government offices on Grand Turk; and into

(b) allegations of corruption in the public works department; and into

(c) any other matters related thereto.

The commission will aim to submit its report by 1 June.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Inner City Strategy

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what official visits he intends to make to the west midlands to discuss with local councillors the Government's inner city strategy for improving job opportunities in areas of high unemployment.

Mr. Waddington: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to make a further visit to the west midlands for this specific purpose.

Community Relations Councils

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff are currently employed by community relations councils; and what are their costs to the Government in terms of full-time, part-time, Commission for Racial Equality funded, local authority funded and Manpower Services Commission funded, respectively.

Mr. Waddington: I understand from the Commission for Racial Equality that in the financial year 1984-85, the latest period for which the information is readily available, it funded 180 community relations officers and the full-time equivalent of 3½ support staff. In addition, in the same year, the full-time equivalent of 428½ support staff were funded by local authorities, 305 by the Manpower Service Commission, 37 under the youth training scheme and four from other non-Government sources.

The most recent information about cost that is readily available is that given in appendix 10 to the Commission's report for 1984. That shows that the cost to the Commission for Racial Equality was £2,562,795 in 1984-85 and to local authorities £2,854,405 in 1983-84.

The cost to the other organisations is not available centrally.

Convicted Terrorists

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek early agreement among the nations of the European Economic Community on a definition of circumsances in which a convicted terrorist is returned to his country of origin.

Mr. Mellor: Arrangements among European Community countries already provide for the extradition of convicted terrorists. The Council of Europe convention on the suppression of terrorism also provides that fugitives accused or convicted of certain serious offences may not avoid extradition by claiming that their offences were political. We shall continue to press for the broadest application of that convention by our European partners. In addition, the United Kingdom has ratified the Council of Europe convention on the transfer of sentenced prisoners, which enables foreign prisoners to serve their sentences in their own country. This convention is open to all European Community countries, and a draft agreement among member states is at an advanced stage of preparation. We have previously explained that public policy considerations may cause us to refuse the transfer of a terrorist or any other prisoner who had been convicted of particularly horrific crimes.

Terrorism

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report* the date and nature of terrorist incidents in the United Kingdom, showing Northern Ireland separately for each of the last three years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Immigration

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers and immigration officers, and of what rank, were involved in operations in connection with alleged breaches of immigration control *(a)* in October 1985 at the San Lorenze restaurant, Worple road mews, London SW19, *(b)* in November 1985 at La Cabanita dancing club, Gloucester road, London SW7, *(c)* in November 1985 at the Carretto restaurant, Notting Hill, London, *(d)* in December 1985 at the Sol y Sombra Colombian club, Charlotte street, London W1 and *(e)* in February 1986 at the Rio Laundrette, Shepherds Bush, London; how many people, and of what nationality, were (i) interviewed and (ii) detained in each operation and for how long; and with regard to which alleged breaches of immigration law these people were interviewed or charged.

Mr. Waddington: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Parole

Viscount Cranborne asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time between application for parole by prisoners serving life sentences and the decision of the parole board.

Mr. Mellor: The average time at present taken between consideration of a case by the local review committee at the prison to consideration by the Parole Board is about 10½ months.

Computers and Software

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy on the purchase for his Department or recommendation for use in departmental establishments of computers or software which are subject to extra-territorial constraints as to their use, movement or resale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: My Department does not accept any extra-territorial constraints when making such purchases.

Prisoners (Deaths)

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners who died in prisons in England and Wales during each of the past five years died from terminal illnesses; and, in respect of these, when he was notified that the prisoner was suffering from a terminal illness.

Mr. Mellor: In 1985 there were 20 deaths from natural causes (not including 15 in which the coroner's verdict is awaited). In the preceding four years the figures were:

Year	*Number*
1981	35
1982	28
1983	33
1984	31

Our statistical records do not enable us to identify all cases in which the medical officer formed the opinion, in advance of death occurring, that the patient's illness was likely to terminate fatally. As I indicated in my reply to a question by the hon. Member on 12 March 1986, at column *467* a report on such a case is required only in certain circumstances.

Custodial Institutions (Costs)

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the total running revenue costs for 1985 and 1984 or the last 12 months for which figures are available for the following custodial institutions in Leicestershire: *(a)* Ashwell, *(b)* Welford road prison, *(c)* Stokenhall, *(d)* Gartree prison and *(e)* Glen Parva youth custody centre.

Mr. Mellor: In the financial years 1983-84 and 1984-85, the latest years for which information is available, the total (net) operating costs of the following custodial institutions in Leicestershire were:

	1983-84 £ *thousand*	*1984-85* £ *thousand*
Ashwell	2,814	2,949
Leicester (Welford Rd)	5,686	6,155
Gartree	6,696	7,383
Glen Parva	7,635	7,677
Stocken	*	*

* (not applicable—establishment opened in July 1985).

Thomas More Street, EC1 (Access)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis about restrictions placed on access to Thomas More street, London EC1 for *(a)* residents and *(b)* relatives of residents on Saturdays and Sundays.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the commissioner that on those occasions when demonstrations are held outside the News International plant at Wapping barriers are placed at the junction of Thomas More street and East Smithfield. Persons who wish to pass through the barriers are asked to state their destination. Residents and their relatives are allowed to pass through.

Metropolitan Police (Water Cannon)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is considering using dye or anti-riot irritant in the water during the testing of water cannon by the Metropolitan police force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Tests will concentrate on the use of the two prototype water cannon with plain water but will also include consideration of how additives might be used.

Leicester Prison

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Leicester, East of 24 March, what has been the certified normal accommodation for Leicester prison in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: The information is given in the following table:

Certified normal accommodation of Leicester prison at the end of February

Year	*CNA*
1976	238
1977	230
1978	230
1979	217
1980	205
1981	201
1982	201
1983	201
1984	201
1985	198
1986	203

Dr. K. Featherstone

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any work is being or has been undertaken for his Department by Dr. K. Featherstone of Stirling university.

Mr. Hurd: Dr. Featherstone is not undertaking any work for the Home Office nor has he done so in the past.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish an analysis of the increase in the number of Civil Service employees in his Department between 1979 and 1985, together with an explanation of these increases, and an indication of the implications for the effectiveness of the various sections.

Mr. Hurd: The information sought is contained in table 3.11.5 and 3.11.7 of the Home Office section of the "Government's Expenditure Plans 1986-87 to 1988-89" (Cmnd. 9702-II) and the accompanying text.

Prisoners (Statistics)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the longest period of imprisonment to which a fine defaulter was sentenced in 1984;

(2) how many prisoners were serving sentences of over 10 years on 30 June 1984.

Mr. Mellor: My noble Friend will reply as soon as possible.

Community Service Orders

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average cost of a community service order in *(a)* the financial year 1983-84 and *(b)* the financial year 1984-85.

Mr. Mellor: The average annual cost of each person on a community service order in the financial year 1983-84 is estimated in "Probation Statistics, England and Wales, 1984" (Table 12.3, page 118) at £630. The average cost of a community service order, which on average lasts about eight months, is estimated in paragraph 12.5, pages 115-116 at £420. These estimates involve a number of assumptions and should be treated with reserve. The information for 1984-85 is not yet available, but this will be included in "Probation Statistics, England and Wales, 1985", which it is planned to publish towards the end of 1986.

Prison Governors

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the prison governor grades were previously prison officers.

Mr. Mellor: A total of 43·5 per cent. of prison governor grades were previously prison officers.

Prison Officers (Assaults)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many assaults on prison officers in the most recent convenient year required the officer to be off work for more than three days.

Mr. Mellor: The number of assaults on prison officers recorded centrally in 1985 which required the officer to be off work for more than three days was 363.

Prisoners (Segregation)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many male and female prisoners, resepectively, were segregated *(a)* for good order and discipline and *(b)* for their own protection on any recent convenient date; and on the same date how many prisoners were contained in the special wings for such prisoners at Maidstone, Gloucester and Wakefield prisons.

Mr. Mellor: The number of male sentenced prisoners segregated at 31 January 1985 (the most recent date for which information is available) was as follows *(a)* 93 for reasons of good order or discipline; *(b)* 542 for their own protection. Figures are not kept centrally for unconvicted or female prisoners. The number of persons in the special units at that date were as follows: Maidstone 98; Gloucester 76; Wakefield 24.

Prisoners (Special Units)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if there are any plans to establish further special units for rule 43 prisoners on the lines of those at Maidstone, Gloucester and Wakefield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: There are no plans at present to establish further special units in addition to the national special units at Maidstone, Gloucester and Wakefield and the regional units for vulnerable prisoners at Gartree and Albany. It is our policy to ensure that prisoners resume association wherever this can be achieved by means such as transfer to another establishment. Special units are designed to cater for those who are unable to resume association under other conditions. We shall continue to keep the need and scope for provision of further special units under review, subject to the availability of accommodation and the overriding need to relieve overcrowding within the system.

Prisoners' Petitions

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the main findings of the research into prisoners' petitions undertaken following the report of the Expenditure Committee in 1978; and what changes were made as a result of this research in each year since then.

Mr. Mellor: A brief account of some aspects of this research, for which the fieldwork began in 1983, is contained in "Accountability in Prisons" (eds. M. Maguire, J. Vagg and R. Morgan) which was published by Tavistock Publications Ltd. in December 1985. A full report of the research is in preparation.

Prisons (Pay Telephones)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in which penal establishments pay telephones have so far been installed for prisoners' use; how many pay telephones have been installed in each establishment; and when pay telephones will be installed in other open establishments.

Mr. Mellor: Pay telephones (using phonecards) are being introduced for the use of prisoners in open establishments. No such telephones have yet been installed; they should be installed in most open establishments by the end of April and as soon as practicable after that in other open establishments.

Vietnamese Refugees

Mr. Barnett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now seek to amend section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 to extend its provisions to meet the needs of Vietnamese refugees.

Mr. Waddington: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to amend section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received advocating the extension of section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 to enable local auhorities to provide assistance to Vietnamese refugees.

Mr. Waddington: Since last September we have received representations from the British Refugee Council and the London borough of Greenwich.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what financial assistance is available from his Department to enable local authorities with substantial numbers of Vietnamese refugees in their area to provide specialised support and assistance to such refugees.

Mr. Waddington: No financial assistance to local authorities is currently available from the Department for this specific purpose. We do, however, continue to fund a programme of support for the Vietnamese, run under the auspices of the British Refugee Council; it will cost about £400,000 in 1986-87.

"Policing the Miners' Dispute"

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what recommendations he has received from the Association of Chief Police Officers about the role, location and title of the national reporting centre;

(2) if, in the light of the Police Advisory Board's consideration of the Association of Police Officers' paper on "Policing the Miners' Dispute", he will take steps to encourage police authorities to provide their forces with standard personnel carriers in sufficient numbers to meet the whole of their mutual aid commitment, compatible telecommunications equipment capable of linking into a national emergency channel, common training standards, including regular inter-force exercises and consistent standards of charging for the provision of police support units to forces that need mutual support.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Our officials will discuss with the Association of Chief Police Officers the matters raised in its paper, including those relating to the national reporting centre.

Police Road Blocks (Tower Hamlets)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police road blocks have been set up since 25 January in the borough of Tower Hamlets; and where.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner that under the powers conferred by section 52 of the Metropolitan Police Act 1839 barriers have been erected and pedestrian and vehicular access diverted at the following locations within the borough of Tower Hamlets on a number of occasions since 25 January 1986:

Thomas More street/East Smithfield
Wapping lane/Highway
Garnett street/Highway
Glamis road/Highway
Virginia street/Highway
Breezes hill/Highway
Artichoke hill/Highway
Chigwell hill/Highway

News International (Policing)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers have been engaged in policing the News International dispute in Wapping on successive Saturday nights since, and including, 25 January.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information is as follows:

	Numbers
25 January	281
1 February	333
8 February	368
15 February	1,009
22 February	1,102
1 March	1,098
8 March	1,751
15 March	878
22 March	1,380

Unruly Certificates

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to abolish or reduce the use of the unruly certificate by the courts in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend proposes to introduce an order defining more restrictively than does the Certificates of Unruly Character (Conditions) Order 1977 the circumstances in which a 15 or 16-year-old boy may be remanded to a prison department establishment. In particular, he proposes that the power should be confined to cases where the boy has been charged with murder, attempted murder, rape or certain other equally serious offences. He is also considering whether there are other ways in which the range of cases where remands to a prison department establishment is possible might be reduced to the minimum.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many unruly certificates were granted by the courts in England and Wales in respect of 15 and 16-year-old males in each year from 1980 to 1985, and during the first 10 weeks of 1986.

Mr. Mellor: The first column in the following table shows the number of certificates of unruliness issued in respect of boys aged 15 or 16. A fresh certificate is required each time a boy is remanded under the unruliness certification procedure, and the second column in the table shows the number of boys aged 14 to 16 first received into prisons and remand centres, on remand before or during trial, under the procedure. Information for 1986 is not yet available.

	Certificates for boys aged 15 or 16	*Boys aged 14*, 15 or 16*
1980	2,748	1,910
1981	2,494	1,766
1982	2,270	1,544
1983	1,829	1,507
1984	1,699	†1,441
1985	‡ —	†1,513

* The unruliness certification procedure ceased to be available for 14 year old boys on 31 March 1981.
† Provisional.
‡ Central recording of this information ceased at the end of 1984.

Young Persons (Custody)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many 15 and 16-year-old males who were sentenced to periods of custody by the courts in England and Wales served part of their sentence in an adult prison establishment during *(a)* 1984, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* the first 10 weeks of 1986;

(2) how many males aged 15 and 16 years who were the subject of unruly certificates were remanded into adult prison establishments by the courts in England and Wales during *(a)* 1984, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* the first 10 weeks of 1986;

Mr. Mellor: My noble Friend will reply as soon as possible.

Wapping (Police Road Blocks)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Wapping residents have complained to the police since 25 January about access to their homes being affected by police road blocks.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that one member of the public has made such a complaint.

Mr. Norman Davis

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the judiciary were asked for their views on the possibility of releasing Mr. Norman Davis from prison following the hearing of the local review committee at Featherstone prison in December 1984.

Mr. Mellor: The papers were sent to the judiciary on 18 December 1985 and a reply was received on 14 January 1986.

Black and Ethnic Minority Youth

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking, following the

abolition of the Greater London council, to seek to ensure that an all London forum of black and ethnic minority youth will continue to be resourced.

Mr. Waddington: As from 1 April 1986, it is for the London boroughs, singly or collectively as appropriate, to decide on the support, if any, to be provided by them to particular activities and voluntary organisations.

Independent Television Levy

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the revised arrangements for the independent television levy will take effect; and what will be the rates of levy under those arrangements.

Mr. Hurd: We intend to make the changes by means of the 1986 Finance Bill and to make them effective from 1 April 1986. However, levy will not be collected under the new arrangements until the new statutory provisions have been enacted. We propose that the standard rate of levy on ITV contractors' profits should be reduced from 66·7 per cent. to 45 per cent. and that the rate applying to profits from the provision of programmes abroad should be 22·5 per cent. We also propose to increase the value of the minimum "free slice" of profits which are not liable to levy from £650,000 to £800,000. This figure will be reviewed from time to time.

Direct Broadcasting by Satellite

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to bring into force sections 37 to 41 of the Broadcasting Act 1984 providing for the establishment of direct broadcasting by satellite services by the Independent Broadcasting Authority; whether he has any plans to seek to extend the length of the contract period stipulated in section 38 of that Act; and what transmission standards will be required for these services.

Mr. Hurd: I have made an order bringing these provisions into force on 1 April and intend to take an early legislative opportunity to extend the contract period for the provision of a DBS service from 12 to 15 years. The Government's policy on transmission standards is that, subject to any significant new factors emerging, C-MAC should be used for all DBS services.

Shops Act 1950

Mr. William Powell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any estimate has been made of the annual costs to local authorities of enforcing the Shops Act 1950; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I regret that we have no information on the costs to local authorities of enforcing the Shops Act 1950. The number of convictions for illegal Sunday trading (743 in 1984) suggests that there is very little enforcement of the Sunday trading provisions. In order to achieve a reasonable level of enforcement, it is clear that considerable additional expenditure would be required by local authorities, and the costs would have to be met by the ratepayer.

Fraud

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of fraud were reported to the City of London police fraud squad in each year since 1979.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 March 1986, c. *48*]: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the City of London that the available information is as given in the table:

Substantiated cases of fraud report to the City of London Police Fraud Squad

	Number
1979	53
1980	69
1981	54
1982	60
1983	60
1984	88
1985	81

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, of the cases of fraud reported to the City of London police fraud squad in each year since 1979 (i) how many in each year were subsequently reported to the Director of Public Prosecutions and (ii) of the cases subsequently reported to the Director of Public Prosecutions how many in each year resulted in prosecutions conducted by the Director of Public Prosecutions and how many were successful.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 March 1986, c. *47-8*]: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the City of London that the available information is as follows:

Investigations of fraud started by the City of London Police

Year investigation started	*Reported to the DPP*	*Resulted in prosecution conducted by the DPP*
1979	12	7
1980	28	6
1981	20	9
1982	20	8
1983	26	7
1984	22	5
1985*	5	—

* 1 January to 31 October 1985.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) of the cases of fraud reported to the City of London police fraud squad in each year since 1979 *(a)* how many in each year were subsequently reported to the relevant prosecuting solicitor's department and *(b)* of the cases so reported to the relevant prosecuting solicitor's department, how many in each year resulted in prosecutions conducted by the relevant prosecuting solicitor's department, and how many were successful in each instance;

(2) of the cases of fraud reported to the City of London police fraud squad in each year since 1979, how many in each year were subsequently reported to the Department of Trade and Industry and of the cases subsequently reported to the Department of Trade and Industry how many in each year resulted in prosecutions conducted by the relevant prosecuting solicitor's department; and how many were successful in each instance.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 March 1986, c. *48*]: I understand from the Commissioner of Police for the City of London that more detailed information than that given in the replies to the hon. Member on 6 December 1985 at column *358* could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Industry Year

6. **Mr. Butterfill** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the progress of Industry Year in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: Northern Ireland is playing its full part in the national Industry Year initiative. The local campaign was successfully launched on 16 January. Groups are at work on industry and education issues and on publicising the importance of industry as the generator of our future wealth and prosperity. One particular initiative is the mini-enterprise scheme, which is to be made available to every school in Northern Ireland with financial support from the Ulster Bank Limited.

Mr. Peter Barry (Talks)

7. **Mr Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what matters were discussed at his recent meeting with Mr. Peter Barry, Foreign Minister of the Irish Republic.

Mr. Scott: I would refer the hon. Member to a reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave to questions by the hon. Members for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) and for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), earlier today.

Intergovernmental Conference

11. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the cost to public funds of the security of the secretariat at Maryfield of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, specifying the amounts attributable to meetings of the conference.

Mr. Scott: As at 19 March 1986, payments made or in the process of being made were £336,000. This figure includes the costs for the RUC personnel and for security works for the accommodation of the Secretariat building.

In addition, a further £64,500 was paid for policing the secretariat on the day of the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

15. **Mr. Gow** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how he proposes to make the Anglo-Irish agreement more acceptable to the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I recognise that many in the Unionist community in Northern Ireland are unhappy about aspects of the agreement. I believe that their reaction is based on fundamental misunderstandings about the terms and operation of the agreement, which I will continue to make every effort to remedy. I hope that Unionist leaders will take up our offer of further dialogue, which was renewed in my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's letter of 21 March.

18. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will arrange an early meeting with Unionist right hon. and hon. Members representing constituencies in Northern Ireland to discuss the operation of the Anglo-Irish agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: I am ready to talk to the elected representatives from the Unionist community about the Anglo-Irish agreement at any time. I hope that we can meet soon to pursue the matters most recently set out in the letter my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister sent to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley).

All Children Together (Aid)

16. **Mr. Burt** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money he has given to the educational charity All Children Together in each of the last three financial years.

Dr. Mawhinney: Apart from a small school's essay competition grant in 1984, the major demand for Government grant from All Children Together has been for Lagan college.

Wages Inspectorate

17. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many workers in Northern Ireland were found to be underpaid as a result of checks by the wages inspectorate; and what was the total of repayments made in the latest year for which figures are available.

Dr. Boyson: In 1985, 84 workers were found to be underpaid and the repayments made totalled £26,750.

Day of Protest

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has on the cost of overtime payments to *(a)* security forces and *(b)* clean-up crews due to the day of protest on 3 March.

Mr. Scott: The cost of overtime payments to members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary as a direct consequence of the day of protest on 3 March is estimated at £470,000. Her Majesty's Forces do not receive overtime payments. There were also some small overtime payments to employees of the Roads Service.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary as to how far the Royal Ulster Constabulary was extended on Monday 3 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) on 26 March 1986.

Prisoners (Deaths)

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prisoners died in prisons in Northern Ireland during each of the past five years for which records are available; what ages were the deceased; how many of such deaths were from natural causes; how many were

from terminal illnesses; and, in respect of these, when he was notified that the prisoner was suffering from a terminal illness.

Mr. Scott: The information for the years 1981-85 inclusive is as follows:

Year	Deaths	Age	Number
1981	*11	23	2
		24	1
		25	2
		26	3
		27	1
		30	1
		40	1
1982	None		
1983	None		
1984	†2	28	1
		34	1
1985	‡2	23	1
		42	1

* Including one in an outside hospital after the prisoner had undergone heart surgery; the others were prisoners who had taken part in a prolonged hunger strike.

† One in an outside hospital following injuries sustained in the course of an attempted escape in a bin lorry; one suicide.

‡ Both suicides.

Parades (Re-routeing)

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has received from the Northern Ireland Police Authority, the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and elsewhere, to seek to prevent any bans or re-routeing of traditional parades from becoming a vehicle of disorder.

Mr. Tom King: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

City of Belfast

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures he is taking for the administration of the city of Belfast following the decision by the courts that councillors acted illegally in delegating their function to the town clerk.

Dr. Boyson: It is for the Belfast city council to consider the implications of the recent court decision. Should the actions of councillors threaten the discharge of statutory functions, the Government will take such measures as are appropriate.

My hon. Friend will note that the Department of the Environment has now approved estimates, authorised expenditure and made a district rate for Belfast for 1986-87 because of the council's failure to discharge these functions.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list his powers in relation to giving directions to the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Mr. Tom King: The Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary operates under the law. He is not subject to direction by the Secretary of State in the operational control of the force. The Secretary of State does have powers of direction in relation to certain administrative areas, for example, under article 37(3) of the Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 1981. However, a definitive list of such powers is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Couchman asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many unemployed persons in Northern Ireland have taken advantage of the enterprise allowance scheme since the scheme's introduction.

Dr. Boyson: Since the scheme was introduced in August 1982, 3,885 eligible participants have been admitted to the scheme.

District Council Commissioners

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to report to the House any cases of the appointment of commissioners to discharge district council functions.

Dr. Boyson: Yes, that would be the Goverment's intention. Any order made under the provisions of article 3 of the Local Government (Temporary Provisions) (NI) Order would, of course, be made available to the House.

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the names and qualifications of such persons who have been or may be, appointed as commissioners for the discharge if necessary of district council functions.

Dr. Boyson: Arrangements exist for the appointment of persons under article 3 of the Local Government (Temporary Provisions) (NI) Order 1986 if necessary. No persons have been appointed to date.

Republic of Ireland

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what subjects he expects to discuss at his next meeting with representatives of the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) earlier today.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action has been taken to secure for Northern Ireland companies a share of the opportunities arising from the construction of the Channel fixed link.

Dr. Boyson: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has personally contacted the chairman of the Channel Tunnel Group to enlist his support in ensuring, wherever possible, that Northern Ireland companies secure a share of the opportunities presented by the project. Officials of the Industrial Development Board are following this up with the group and with individual members of the consortium.

Autocrime

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prosecutions there have been in Northern Ireland for theft of a motor vehicle; and how many of these have been successful.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March 1986]: The information requested in respect of the past three years is as follows:

	Magistrates' court			*Crown court*			
	Persons proceeded against	*Not guilty*	*Guilty*	*Committed for trial at Crown court*	*Proceeded against*	*Guilty*	*Not guilty*
i. *Theft and unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle*							
1983	77	3	53	21	21	18	3
1984	64	3	47	14*	21	20	1
1985	56	5	35	16	16	15	1
ii. *Hijacking*							
1983	38	3	—	35	49	48	1
1984	17	1	—	16	26	26	—
1985	26	2	—	24	40	40	—
iii. *Taking and driving away and allowing oneself to be carried*							
1983	553	32	521†	—	—	—	—
1984	563	29	533	*1	—	—	—
1985	†615	26	587	*2	—	—	—

* Charges reduced or changed at Crown court.

† I regret that the reply given to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North on 7 March did not take account of the persons proceeded against in 1985 for theft and hijacking. These figures are shown separately above.

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many motor vehicles have been reported stolen in the Province in each of the last three years; and how many of these subsequently have been recovered.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March 1986]: Information on the numbers of vehicles stolen is not available. However, the numbers of vehicles unlawfully taken* in Northern Ireland in each of the last three years, and the numbers of vehicles recovered in each of these years, are as follows:

	Vehicles taken†	*Vehicles recovered*
1983	6,346	5,847
1984	6,767	6,206
1985	6,849	6,169

* This term includes theft, taking without the owner's consent and hijacking.

† The totals do not include plant and machinery.

ENERGY

Sellafield

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list, year by year, from 1979 to the present day, how many accidents were reported at the Windscale/Sellafield nuclear establishment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: On 26 July 1982 my right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Mr. Moore) announced at column *274* revised procedures for the more prompt reporting to Ministers of significant nuclear incidents. Since then there have been one reportable incident at Sellafield in 1982, and two each in 1983 and 1984. Under the previous criteria, which included many insignificant incidents, there were 25 incidents at Sellafield in 1979, 20 in 1980 and 16 in 1981. Details of these incidents are reported in the Health and Safety Executive quarterly statements of reportable nuclear incidents, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list those civil servants from his Department currently involved in negotiations with the European Commission to achieve a mutually satisfactory safeguards regime for the joint civil-military material balance area at Sellafield.

Mr. Goodlad: Officials from the safeguards office of the Department of Energy are involved in these negotiations.

Severn Barrage

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will estimate the maximum electricity output of the projected Severn barrage.

Mr. David Hunt: Two sites have been studied by the Severn tidal power group for a possible tidal energy barrage in the Severn estuary. The estimate for a barrage at the Cardiff-Weston super Mare site is an average annual energy output of approximately 14 Terrawatt hours. The estimate for the second site close to the Severn bridge is an average annual energy output of approximately 3 Terrawatt hours.

Computers and Software

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his policy towards the purchase for use in his Department of computers or software which are subject to the extraterritorial control on their use, movement or resale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: This Department does not accept any extraterritorial constraints when making such purchases.

Plutonium

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the civil nuclear reactors in which plutonium was generated and subsequently transferred to military use under article 14 of the tripartite safeguards agreement 1978.

Mr. Goodlad: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) on 26 July 1985.

Plutonium (CEGB)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will place in the Library the exchange of letters between his Department and the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board advising the latter not to publish details of plutonium produced in Central Electricity Generating Board reactors.

Mr. Goodlad: The position has not changed since my right hon. Friend wrote to the hon. Member on 9 April 1985.

Nuclear Materials

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether any *(a)* plutonium, *(b)* enriched uranium or *(c)* other special nuclear materials in the United Kingdom have ever been withdrawn from EEC ownership under the Euratom treaty, article 86, and redesignated non-civil.

Mr. Goodlad: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Oil Exports (Israel)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Energy what guidance he has given to oil companies on the export of oil to Israel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave my hon. Friend on 8 December 1983 at column 222.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Energy what are the implications for United Kingdom policy of the recent decision of the European Court regarding the export of oil to the state of Israel.

Mr. Peter Walker: The recent rulings of the European Court of Justice confirm Her Majesty's Government's view that the guidance given to exporters of North sea crude oil is in conformity with European Community law.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will define the three forms of radioactive waste storage repositories *(a)* above ground, *(b)* near surface subterranean and *(c)* deep cavity subterranean in terms to be adopted by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate in licensing these storage sites; if he will identify and place in the Library the particular Nuclear Installations Inspectorate publications that describe the licensing procedures and criteria for nuclear materials storage sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 6 March at column 208.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Land Resources Development Centre

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of the annual budget and staffing levels at the Land Resources Development Centre for each of the last five years; and if he will specify which areas of the centre's work, including specific posts, have been reduced as a result of expenditure cuts.

Mr. Raison: Total staff numbers serving with LRDC on 1 April each year (vacancies excluded) were:

	Number
1981	87·5
1982	78·5
1983	74·5
1984	62·5
1985	48·0

These figures include United Kingdom-based staff and those serving overseas (of whom there were 17 on 1 April 1985).

The LRDC budget comprises the salaries and so on of United Kingdom-based staff, salaries and so on of certain expanded home-based staff, general expenses including accommodation charges, and capital expenditure. Outturn figures for the past five years are:

	£ million
1981-82	0·855
1982-83	0·891
1983-84	0·963
1984-85	1·021
1985-86	*0·971

* Estimate

The salaries of staff serving overseas on assignments for ODA's country technical cooperation programmes are charged to those programmes and do not appear in the LRDC budget.

Since 1 April 1981 a total of 35 professional staff have retired, resigned or been transferred without replacement. The specific areas of reduction and numbers of posts are: Water Resources Engineering (4), Agriculture/Agronomy (5), Livestock Management (2), Forestry (2), Soil Science (3), Socio-economics (1), Ecology (2), Information (1), Soil Conservation Training (1), Soil Chemistry (1), Statistics/Computer (2), Cartography (7). 4½ administrative posts have also been shed.

Middle East Projects (Departmental Funding)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those projects in the middle east which receive funding from his Department; and which of the projects cater for Palestinians.

Mr. Raison: Details of the British bilateral aid programme in the middle east are provided in "British Aid Statistics" which is available in the Library of the House. Information in more detail could be provided only at disproportionate cost. We also contribute to projects in the

middle east being undertaken by British voluntary agencies, the European Community, the World Bank and United Nations agencies.

Aid is given to Palestinians mainly through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the near east (UNRWA). We also give assistance, mainly through British voluntary agencies, for projects in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. The European Community also contributes to UNRWA and has a programme of projects for the West Bank and Gaza, as do certain United Nations agencies.

South Africa (Disadvantaged Persons)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what projects his Department supports to assist disadvantaged persons *(a)* in South Africa and *(b)* who have left South Africa as refugees.

Mr. Raison: Disadvantaged groups within South Africa benefit from scholarships for study in the United Kingdom and from our support (expert advice, books and equipment) for several non-formal education projects in the Republic. We expect to spend about £1 million on these activities in the coming financial year. Our support for South African refugees is channelled through the United Nations Educational Training Programme for Southern Africa and the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation which undertake various training and educational activities.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Child Abuse

Sir Peter Emery asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what measures he intends to take to ensure that there is a proper investigation into the background of those in the independent further education sector and in voluntary youth centres for evidence of offences of child abuse, drink or drug abuse and of other misconduct against children;

(2) what measures he intends to introduce to vet teachers entering the profession for evidence of offences against children and drink or drug abuse, or of other misconduct.

Mr. Chris Patten: Joint guidance from the Secretaries of State for Education and Science, Home Affairs, Social Services, and for Wales is at an advanced stage of preparation on new arrangements for checking the criminal background of those, including teachers, who are seeking to work with children in the statutory sector. It also deals with improvements in the arrangements for reporting convictions for offences committed after engagement. Similar arrangements for the voluntary and private sectors are at an earlier stage of consideration.

Computers and Software

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy on the purchase for the use of his Department, or the recommendation for use in educational establishments, of computers or software which are subject to extraterritorial constraints as to their use, movement or resale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: This Department does not accept any extraterritorial constraints when making such purchases.

Hearing-impaired Students

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to the reply, *Official Report*, 17 March, columns 5-6, if he will take steps to ensure that his Department holds centrally the information on the numbers and proportions of hearing-impaired students who continue with higher education of various kinds and on the policies of local education authorities in assisting and encouraging these students.

Mr. Chris Patten: It would be invidious to collect such information on hearing-impaired students only, as distinct from the generality of handicapped students. My right hon. Friend does not consider that the cost, both centrally and locally, of maintaining a central record of such information would be justified by the contribution it might make to Government policies.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to the answer of 17 March, *Official Report*, column 6, when he expects to be able to make a statement on his policy towards the principle of charging the parents of hearing-impaired children aged over 16 years for board and lodging costs which arise because no appropriate further education opportunities are available within the county boundary and to continue their education the children have to go elsewhere.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend will consider the principle of such charges in the light of the examination of the several complaints on this score which the Department is currently conducting. The reply to the National Deaf Children's Society, to which my answer of 17 March referred, will furnish a statement of his policy on the matter and I shall ensure that the right hon. Member receives a copy of this.

Nursing Education

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, in the light of the Royal College of Nursing commission on nursing education and the consultation paper issued by the English National Board, he will include in the proposed White Paper on higher education proposals on nursing education.

Mr. Waiden: The Government are not yet ready to publish their response to the proposals that they have received about the future of nursing education. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services is awaiting a report from the National Health Service management board following the board's consultation on the proposals with local health authoorities. The Government will publish their response in the form that seems most appropriate at the time when they are ready to do so.

Donna de Groot and Stuart Ford

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, when he expects to receive a response from Bedfordshire education authority in respect of the request from the parents of Donna de Groot and Stuart Ford for the provision of further education to assist their deafness.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend is assured that Bedfordshire LEA will send a response to the Department's inquiries about further education provision for these young people early next month.

Dr. K. Featherstone

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether any work is being or has been undertaken for his Department by Dr. K. Featherstone of Stirling university.

Sir Keith Joseph: Not so far as I am aware.

Private Schools

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in respect of the procedures followed by his Department in the registration of a private school.

Mr. Dunn: The registration procedures are laid down in part III of the Education Act 1944. No recent representations on these have been received.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* those schools which have received provisional registration from his Department in the last six years, giving the name and location of the school, the date of provisional registration, the date of inspection and date of final registration in each case.

Mr. Dunn: 428 independent schools provisionally registered with the Department in the last six years. The detailed information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* those private schools which have been inspected by his Department over the last six years, giving the month and year of inspection in each case and whether the school is still in operation.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is as follows:

School	*Area*	*Date of inspection*
Tuition Centre	Avon	February 1980
Goddard School*	Wiltshire	January 1980
Chethams School	Manchester	May 1980
Sheffield Boys Ind	Sheffield	November 1980
Durnford House*	Hereford & Worcester	November 1980
Dorul Uloom Al Arabia	Bury	January 1981
Falcon Manor	Northants	January 1981
St. Chads Cathedral	Staffordshire	May 1981
Looking Glass*	Avon	June 1981
Cranbrook College	Redbridge	June 1981
Kingsley Prep School	Wirral	July 1981
Folly Farm	Dorset	October 1981
Gad's Hill Place	Kent	October 1981
Emmanuel Christian	Lancashire	June 1981
St. Mary's Town and Country	London	November 1981
Crookham Court	Berkshire	December 1981
Monkton Wyld School*	Dorset	November 1981
North London Talmud Torah	London	November 1981
Wakefield Ind School	Wakefield	October 1981
Denstone College	Staffordshire	October 1981
Franklin House*	Enfield	November 1981
Akhurst School	Newcastle	January 1982
Loughborough High	Leicestershire	January 1982
Mount School	Hereford & Worcester	February 1982
Felsted Kindergarten	Essex	January 1982
Talmud Torah Chinuch N'Orim	Salford	May 1982
Morcott Hall School	Leicestershire	May 1982
Dulwich College Prep	Kent	June 1982
Eastcourt School	Redbridge	June 1982
Lyndhurst House	London	November 1982
St. George's Boys' School	Suffolk	November 1982
Abbey International	Hereford & Worcester	November 1982
Downsend School	Surrey	January 1983
Talmud Torah Machziket-Hadass	London	June 1983
Acton Reynald	Shropshire	March 1983
Mary Underwood Prep*	Kent	February 1983
Elgin House*	Doncaster	May 1983
Coventry Christian Academy*	Coventry	January 1983
Shobrooke House	Devon	May 1983
Chaitanya College*	Hereford & Worcester	May 1983
St. Probus	Wiltshire	February 1983
Summerfields	Oxfordshire	February 1983
Twycross House	Leicestershire	November 1983
Goddard School*	Wiltshire	October 1983
Acorn	Havering	January 1984
Duff Miller Tutorial	London	January 1984
Howsham Hall Prep	North Yorkshire	February 1984
Zakariya Girls	Kirklees	March 1984
St. Faith's Prep	Cambridgeshire	March 1984
Bnos Yisroel	Salford	March 1984
Muslim Girls High	Kirklees	July 1984
Newcastle under Lyme	Staffordshire	March 1984
Ranby House Prep	Nottinghamshire	November 1984
St. Nicholas Prep	Birmingham	November 1984
Rossholme School	Somerset	October 1984
Compton Greenfield*	Avon	November 1984
Alleyn's School	London	November 1984
Hillstone School	Hereford & Worcester	January 1985
Faith Christian	Suffolk	January 1985
Life Christian	London	January 1985
Shekinah Christian	London	February 1985
New Court Christian	London	February 1985
Institute of Islamic Education	Kirklees	May 1985
Oholei Yossef Yitzchok	Salford	November 1984

* School now closed.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is satisfied with the current time taken by his Department between the provisional registration of a private school and the inspection of those schools.

Mr. Dunn: Yes.

PRIME MINISTER

EC (Budget Abatements)

Q24. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Prime Minister if she has any reason to revise her conclusion that the European Economic Community will be in a position to pay the abatements to the United Kingdom agreed at the Fontainebleau Council, following the address given by the European Community Budget Commissioners to the European Assembly on 13 March; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The abatement system for the United Kingdom agreed at the Fontainebleau European Council has now been incorporated in the European Community's new own resources decision, which has

been adopted by all member states and has been in force since 1 January 1986. As this decision has treaty status, the United Kingdom has a right to these abatements, and the Community has an obligation to provide for them in the Community budget.

Land Rover

Q40. **Mr. John Marshall** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to pay an official visit to the Land Rover plant in Solihull; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

Mr. Baldry asked the Prime Minister why the Secretary of State for Employment has responsibility for the technical and vocational education initiative.

The Prime Minister: The initiative is concerned with providing a better preparation for adult and working life. The Manpower Services Commission, which administer, the initiative on behalf of the Secretary of State for Employment, is in touch with the employers' needs and has the necessary powers to fund appropriate curriculum development within individual education authorities.

Education and Training

Mr. Baldry asked the Prime Minister which areas of education and training are the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Education and Science and which are the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Employment.

The Prime Minister: The responsibilities of the two Secretaries of State are not divided on the basis of specific areas of education and training.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science is responsible for securing the effective implementation of national policies for education in partnership with local education authorities in England and with the universities in Great Britain.

The overall responsibility of the Secretary of State for Employment is to contribute towards maximising productive, fair and safe employment in Great Britain. In doing so, he is concerned with education and training programmes relevant to working life.

Within the broad scope of these objectives, both Secretaries of State direct and undertake specific programmes in accordance with the needs and priorities identified by the Government. Some programmes are undertaken by the Manpower Services Commission under the joint supervision of Education and Employment Ministers.

Middle East Visit

Mr. Deakins asked the Prime Minister if she intends to visit east Jerusalem and the West Bank during her forthcoming visit to the middle east.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 14 March to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), at column 595.

Goods and Products (Extra-territorial Controls)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Prime Minister what is her policy towards the support by her presence or that of Ministers or senior colleagues at public functions of companies which seek to supply in the United Kingdom goods and products which are sold subject to extra-territorial controls.

The Prime Minister: Decisions about ministerial participation in company functions are based on all available facts, rather than on particular aspects such as foreign claims to extra-territorial controls over a product that a company happens to supply.

British Nuclear Fuels Ltd

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Prime Minister whether she plans to transfer British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. share ownership to the Secretary of State for Defence in proportion to the military work undertaken by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.

The Prime Minister: No.

Auxiliary Oil Replenishment Vessels

Mr. Clay asked the Prime Minister what discussions she has had with Unionist politicians in recent weeks on the Royal Navy's requirements for auxiliary oil replenishment vessels; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have received several representations from hon. Members about this competition, both in support of the Swan Hunters and Harland and Wolff bids.

Engagements

Mr. Hirst asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 March.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 March.

Mr. Leigh asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 March.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 March.

Mr. Skinner asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 March.

The Prime Minister: In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having meetings with ministerial colleagues and others later today.

TRANSPORT

Glasgow Airport

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review his policy on the usage of Scottish lowland airports with a view to encouraging international carriers to use Glasgow.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government's policy for the Scottish lowlands airports is set out in the airports policy White Paper (Cmnd. 9542). International carriers are already encouraged to use Glasgow and Edinburgh airports

for short-haul services; Prestwick is to continue to serve as the gateway for long-haul (primarily transatlantic) services although, if its financial results do not improve, the policy will be reviewed in 1989.

M50 (Crash Barriers)

Mr. Grist asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he proposes to erect central crash barriers on the M50.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. I am keeping the position under review.

Computers and Software

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy on the purchase or recommendation for use in departmental establishments of computers and software which are subject to extra-territorial constraints as to their use, movement or resale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Ridley: The computing procurement policy of my department is to obtain the best value for money in line with the department's plans for information technology. Procurements are carried out through the central computer and telecommunications agency in the Treasury and in accord with Government policy, on which I refer to the corresponding answer from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Passenger Transport Executives (Travel Cards)

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has had any discussions with passenger transport executives concerning the validity of travel cards issued by them after abolition of the metropolitan county councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: The Department has regular meetings with the passenger transport executives. I am aware of no difficulties concerning the validity of travel cards arising from the abolition of the metropolitan county councils.

Roadside Litter

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review his current policy on the provision of roadside litter bins at laybys in view of the evidence outlined in the 11th report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have noted the comments contained in the commission's report. The evidence available to the Department shows that the removal of litter bins from trunk road laybys has reduced rubbish dumping at these sites. This suggests that a change in policy is not warranted. I shall continue to monitor the situation.

Okehampton Bypass

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the public health authorities in Devon about the likelihood of toxic metal contamination, including arsenic, of the East and West Okement rivers during the construction of the southern route of the Okehampton bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have had no such discussion with public health authorities. We rely on the South-West water authority for advice on measures to take during the construction of the bypass to protect water supplies.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Transport what studies his Department has undertaken to ascertain the extent of mineral deposits including arsenic under the southern route of the Okehampton bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have carried out no studies to ascertain the extent of mineral deposits or arsenic under the route of the Okehampton bypass, because it is not a normal pre-construction activity.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the results of the soil tests on the southern route of the Okehampton bypass which he has commissioned from the Wimpey Laboratories; and if he will publish these results.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We expect to receive the report of the soil investigation in July. As the information is of a specialist nature for road construction purposes, the information will be supplied to those firms invited to tender for the construction of the bypass.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the correspondence he has had with the South-West Wales authority on the subject of the metallic contamination of water courses in the vicinity of the southern route of the Okehampton bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There has not been any such correspondence.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Transport if agreement has yet been reached between the Channel Tunnel Group and British Railways and SNCF as to the amount which the respective railway undertakings will pay Channel Tunnel Group over the life of the fixed-link concession; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Yes. The details are a commercial matter for BR-SNCF and CTG.

British Airways

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether British Airways has sought consent for the separate disposal of its Highland division; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No such consent has been sought.

London (Traffic Surveys)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current estimate of the total cost of the four London area assessment studies.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: When completed the first stage of the studies about the problems of the areas concerned and the associated wide public consultation are expected to cost altogether some £3 million. Lack of co-operation from the GLC has delayed the work and increased the cost. We hope to be able to publish the stage one reports later this year. The cost thereafter will depend upon work commissioned after the public have been able to comment on these reports.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will share information from the London assessment studies traffic surveys with the boroughs and seek their co-operation for the surveys.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. This information will be of great value to all of us.

Cycle Facilities

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much was spent *(a)* by local authorities and *(b)* by his Department on cycle facilities during the financial year 1984-85 and how much is planned to be spent (i) by local authorities and (ii) by his Department on cycle facilities during the financial year 1985-86 and the financial year 1986-87.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Figures are not collected centrally on the amounts spent by local authorities on cycle facilities or on the Department's continuing expenditure on cycle elements in its trunk road improvement schemes. The Department spent £126,000 and £160,000 in the past two years and plans to spend a further £160,000 in the coming year on a special programme of experimental cycling facilities of various kinds to test and develop good design solutions for general use.

Residential Areas (Road Safety)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek to visit the Netherlands during European Road Safety Year, to consider the ways in which it has improved both the traffic safety and environment of large residential areas; and whether he will pursue an experimental project in the United Kingdom aimed at achieving these goals.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. The Urban safety project, being implemented in Bradford, Bristol, Nelson, Reading and Sheffield is designed to achieve similar goals in a United Kingdom context.

Heathrow Airport

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the number of occasions during the past 10 years on which aircraft departing from Heathrow airport have suffered failure of an engine *(a)* whilst still on the runway between starting of roll and normal point of take-off, *(b)* after take-off and below a 1,000 ft altitude and *(c)* between, 1,000 ft and 2,500 ft altitude.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Civil Aviation Authority, which is statutorily responsible for aviation safety, has informed me that it is not able to provide a full answer to this question for the following reasons:

1. Their records over United Kingdom operators only, except for a small number of particularly significant occurrences to foreign operated aircraft.
2. A precautionary engine shut-down with no other critical aspects (for example, fire, aircraft control problems and so on) is not a "reportable occurrence" on three and four-engined aircraft.
3. An engine problem resulting in an abandoned take-off at slow speed is not a "reportable occurrence" unless other critical aspects are involved.
4. Records do not include the precise altitude at which engine loss occurred—only the flight phase.

Given the above limitations the total number of engine losses on CAA records since 1976 is:

(a) Take-off (start of roll to lift off)—33
(b) Initial climb (lift off to approx 1,500 ft)—36
(c) Climb (approx 1,500 ft. to cruise)—70.

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the number of occasions during the last 10 years on which the radar approach control at Heathrow airport has suffered a blackout failure and as to the duration of control loss on each occasion.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Details for the last 10 years are not readily extractable from the Civil Aviation Authority's records. In 1984 and 1985, however, there was a single incident of equipment failure in each year resulting in a total loss of approach radar for four minutes in both cases. In addition there were two incidents in 1985 when radar coverage was lost for a few minutes because of an interruption in electricity supply. The CAA assures me that none of these incidents imperilled the safety of aircraft under approach control at the time.

The CAA has proposed, and my Department has sanctioned, the building of a new approach control room at Heathrow.

Rural Bus Grant

Sir Peter Mills asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much per mile will be available to bus operators from the Government's transitional rural bus grant; and when it will become available.

Mr. David Mitchell: From 1 April 1986 for 12 months, the grant available will be 6p per vehicle mile. Grant will also be available, at reducing rates, for the following three financial years.

SOCIAL SERVICES

"Reform of Social Security"

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how the figures on (i) sick and disabled and (ii) lone parents in table 10B in the technical annex which accompanied the Government's White Paper "Reform of Social Security", Cmnd. 9691, were arrived at; and whether the numbers in receipt of the long-term rate of benefit and additional requirements were taken into account.

Mr. Newton: Table 10B of the technical annex shows the effect that the illustrative rates of income support would have on claimants' underlying entitlement to benefit, after allowing for the minimum contribution to rates. It compares that with the latest information held on their receipt of supplementary benefit including the long-term rate of benefit and additional requirements. As explained in the technical annex this information is taken from a sample survey of claimants receiving regular weekly payments of supplementary benefit in a week in December 1983, adjusted to 1985 benefit rates and to allow for policy changes between 1983 and 1985. A further explanation of the data sources used, the assumptions applied and the illustrative rates of income support is given in pages 9 to 14 of the annex.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the ratio of successful to unsuceessful applications for mobility allowance for each year since 1975.

Mr. Newton: The information from 1976, when the allowance was introduced, is as follows:

	(a) Number of successful claims	*(b) Number of unsuccessful claims*	*(c) Ratio of column (a) to column (b)*
1976	35,100	14,800	2·37 : 1
1977	31,200	15,800	1·97 : 1
1978	42,900	15,300	2·80 : 1
1979	41,700	20,200	2·06 : 1
1980	60,200	25,500	2·16 : 1
1981	41,400	19,300	2·15 : 1
1982	59,000	29,100	2·03 : 1
1983	69,900	36,900	1·89 : 1
1984	73,600	34,400	2·14 : 1
1985	79,400	50,300	1·58 : 1

Community Health Services

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whom he has appointed to make up the panel to initiate the inquiry into the future of community health services.

Mr. Hayhoe: The members of the Inquiry into the future development of the public health function and the specialty of community medicine are as follows:

Mrs. Juliet Baxter—a vice president of the Pre-School Playgroups Association;
Sir Michael Carlisle—Chairman, Trent Regional Health Authority;
Professor Alasdair Geddes — Honorary Professor of Infectious Diseases, University of Birmingham, and Senior Physician in infectious diseases, West Midlands Regional Health Authority;
Mr. Peter Griffiths — District General Manager, Lewisham and North Southwark Health Authority;
Dr. Roderic Griffiths—Director of Health Care Policy, Central Birmingham Health Authority;
Dr Michael O'Brien—Regional Medical Director, East Anglian Regional Health Authority;
Dr. Joseph Smith — Director, The Public Health Laboratory Service;
Mr. Alfred Stocks CBE—retiring on 31 March 1986 as Chief Executive, Liverpool City Council.

The inquiry is chaired by the Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Donald Acheson.

Child Care Workers

Sir Peter Emery asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will seek powers to prohibit unsuitable people, such as those with convictions for offences against children, from being employed as child care workers in view of the first report of the joint review of the Home Office and Department of Health and Social Security on disclosure of criminal convictions of those with access to children;

(2) what measures he intends to introduce to vet child care workers entering the profession for evidence of offences against children, drink and drug abuse or other misconduct.

Mr. Whitney: The joint review report did not recommend that powers should be taken to prohibit the employment of unsuitable people in caring for children, nor do we propose to seek such powers. It is for employers to decide on the suitability of applicants. The recommendations in the report were directed to ensuring that, in making such decisions, adequate arrangements are available to enable employers to be informed of the criminal background of applicants for posts involving substantial access to children.

Consultations on the implementation of the recommendations in the report are at an advanced stage—and it is hoped to announce shortly the establishment of new procedures to provide employers in the statutory child care sector with direct access to police records. Further consideration is being given to arrangements for the voluntary sector.

Worthing District Health Authority

Mr. Higgins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what changes have been made in the revenue and other resources made available to the Worthing district health authority over the past 10 years in cash and real terms.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not held centrally. My right hon. Friend may therefore wish to contact the chairman of the South-West Thames regional health authority for the information he seeks.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what has been the total amount of benefit paid out in Wales as exceptionally severe weather allowance during the last three months;

(2) if he will estimate the total expenditure on exceptionally severe weather payments in Wales in the winters of 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Newton: Total expenditure on exceptionally severe weather payments in Wales in the winter of 1984-85 was £92,679. Information for 1985-86 is not yet available, and will not be collected until the period during which payments are likely to be made is over.

Hypothermia

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many deaths with any mention of hypothermia were reported in the borough of Solihull during the winter of 1985-86.

Mr. Whitney: The provisional number of deaths with any mention of hypothermia on the death certificate, irrespective of whether it did or did not appear as the underlying cause of death, to usual residents of Solihull metropolitan district which were registered in the period 1 November 1985 to 28 February 1986 inclusive, is two.

Breast Milk (Organo-chlorine Residues)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what research has been conducted by his Department into the incidence of levels of organo-chlorine residues in breast milk from mothers which would, if fed to babies, exceed international safety levels for the daily intake of such chemicals in adults.

Mr. Whitney: Surveys were conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in 1963-64, 1979-80

and 1983-84. A further more comprehensive survey is planned for 1987. Though results from the last two surveys showed a general decline in organo-chlorine residues in human milk, the levels of some of the compounds in the majority of the samples were such that breast-fed infants would exceed the acceptable daily intake recommended by the World Health Organisation.

The acceptable daily intake is the quantity which may be safely taken every day for a person's lifetime, and the figure includes a substantial safety margin. Furthermore, the intake of organo-chlorine residues can be expected to fall considerably after weaning; the levels in the United Kingdom diet have shown a decline over the last two decades.

The Department's committee on the toxicity of chemicals in food, consumer products and the environment has considered the results of the latest survey. It has advised that there is insufficient information about the possible health effects, if any, to infants of organo-chlorine residues in breast milk, and has recommended further studies and continued monitoring. The committee emphasised that the known advantages of breast feeding are major ones and these have to be borne in mind when evaluating possible harmful effects of residues in milk.

The results of the surveys and the advice of the Committee on Toxicity have been published, the latest being the report of the working party on pesticide residues (1982-85), food surveillance paper No. 6 (HMSO 1986). A copy is in the Library.

Benefits (Payment Overseas)

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to change the method of payment of social security benefits to people who live overseas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Yes. Generally, United Kingdom pensioners living overseas are at present paid by four-weekly payable orders sent from Newcastle or North Fylde central offices of the Department. As a result they incur postal delays, delays in changing the order into local currency, bank fees and handling charges.

A departmental study has shown that these problems can be substantially reduced by making these payments by automated credit transfer directly into pensioners' bank accounts in the local currency. We have therefore decided to offer this optional service to all pensioners living in countries where the local banking arrangements make it possible.

Initially, we expect it to be possible to offer the new service to pensioners in Australia, Canada, Irish Republic, USA, South Africa, West Germany, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden; in the case of New Zealand, United Kingdom pensioners are already paid through the New Zealand social security authorities rather than by payable order. It is estimated that the new service will cover about 300,000 of the 400,000 United Kingdom pensioners living overseas, and that they will gain by about £3 per payment. Invitations to them to change to the new system will start to be issued later this year.

Following examination of 11 tenders to provide the transfer service, that from the Bank of Scotland has been accepted. Additional jobs at the Bank of Glasgow are likely to result.

Tinnitus

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many specialised tinnitus centres there are in the United Kingdom; in which district health authorities they are situated; and what are their sources of funding;

(2) if he will establish a supra-regional network of tinnitus centres with central funding.

Mr. Whitney: Information on the numbers, funding and situation of tinnitus clinics is not collected centrally. No application for supra-regional funding has been received from any regional or special health authority.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will categorise the number of people known to be suffering from tinnitus according to the severity of the complaint; and if he will give the source of the information.

Mr. Whitney: It is estimated that some 15 per cent. of the adult population experiences symptoms of varying frequency, degree and duration which might be defined broadly as tinnitus, and that some 2 per cent. of adults experiences continuous tinnitus, a proportion of whom would be seriously troubled by the symptom. This information is based on data collected in the 1981 general household survey carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. A copy of its Report is available in the Library.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what proportion of the patients who participated in trials of tinnitus maskers were not helped by using the maskers;

(2) when he received the study of the multi-centre trials of masking devices used to relieve tinnitus; and when he intends to respond to it.

Mr. Whitney: The report of the multi-centre trials of masking devices was received in December 1984. It is a long, technical and complex report which has proved difficult to interpret. The report has been considered by independent scientific referees.

It has been hoped that the report would allow clear guidance to be given about the effectiveness of this form of treatment, but this has not proved possible. It does suggest that some sufferers from tinnitus, particularly those who also suffer from hearing loss, can be assisted by tinnitus maskers although for very few would there be long-term inhibition of the condition. A higher proportion appear to receive some degree of comfort from the device although it does not appear possible to identify such patients in advance. Other forms of treatment, for instance counselling, can also be effective for some patients. I shall shortly be writing to the co-ordinator of the project.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what representations he has received regarding the funding of tinnitus clinics and the National Health Service provision of maskers; what response he has given; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many tinnitus sufferers have received maskers supplied by the National Health Service; and how many National Health Service patients have had to pay for maskers.

Mr. Whitney: In recent years there have been numerous letters from hon. Members and the public about

funding of tinnitus clinics, including the suggestions that they should be regional facilities, supra-regional or centrally funded. The response has been that facilities for the treatment of tinnitus sufferers ought to be available at all hospital ear, nose and throat departments. As for the provision of tinnitus maskers, this is entirely a matter for the clinical judgment of a consultant in relation to a particular patient. He would be aware of the variable benefit that patients derive from this form of treatment. However I am advised that there is not yet general agreement about the effectiveness of this form of treatment compared to others. We have no central information on how many maskers are being provided. Health authorities have no powers to charge National Health Service patients for maskers.

Personal Pensions

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from financial institutions and companies about his proposal in the Social Security Bill for an extra contribution of 2 per cent. payable for five years to all employees taking out personal pensions.

Mr. Newton: A variety of views has been expressed in representations about the extra 2 per cent. contribution for personal pensions and occupational pension schemes which contract out from 1 January 1986. Some share the Government's view that it will serve principally as an encouragement. Others take the view — which the Government do not accept — that it might be taken existing occupational pension schemes.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has yet decided who to appoint to the group which he intends to establish to advise him on aspects of marketing personal pensions and consumer protection.

Mr. Fowler: Membership of the group which will advise Ministers on personal pensions will be announced shortly.

Civil Defence

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what responses he received from medical officers of health authorities in the west midlands region in respect of the survey concerning National Health Service plans in preparation for a nuclear war.

Mr. Whitney: The Department invited comment from health authorities and other bodies on a draft consultation document it issued in June 1985 about civil defence planning in the National Health Service. The West Midlands regional health authority included in its reply advice about the distinction between planning for conventional and for nuclear war, and drew attention to the extent of disruption and the numbers of casualties which could result from a nuclear attack. Officials are considering the large amount of comment received.

Claims (Statistics)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the average number of claims administered each day during the last 12 months at the main social security offices in Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Coventry, Halesowen and Walsall.

Mr. Major: The information requested is not available in respect of the last 12 months. The latest available figures are for the year ending 9 April 1985 and are as follows:

Average number of claims administered each day

Area Covered	*Supplementary Benefit*	*Contributory Benefits*
Wolverhampton	134	74
Birmingham	654	296
Coventry	151	77
Halesowen	89	28
Walsall	109	66

Whooping Cough Vaccine

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his present policy regarding the issuing of warnings to parents about the dangers of the vaccine for whooping cough; and what actions of legal proceedings have been instituted against his Department in respect of the administration of this vaccine.

Mr. Whitney: The Department funds Health Education Council literature for parents which explains the risks associated with whooping cough vaccination and sets out the contra-indications. Doctors and community nurses have also been advised by the Department about the contra-indications to whooping cough vaccination and urged to discuss the matter with parents to help them make informed decisions. Proceedings have been issued against the Department in seven cases.

London Teaching Hospitals (Waiting Times)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the waiting time in each of the London teaching hospitals for hip and knee replacements, arthritis surgery and removal of slipped discs.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. The numbers in the central data sample are too small for reliable estimates to be made below regional level. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairmen of the special health authorities about the information requested.

Abortions

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the total number of abortions performed since 1968 to the present date.

Mr. Hayhoe: The number of notifications of legal abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 from 27 April 1968 to 31 December 1984 in England and Wales is 2,288,255. The provisional number for 1985, including notifications received by the end of February 1986, is 171,580, giving a provisional total to the present date of 2,459,835.

Nurse Education

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the funding of education for nurse teachers in each of the last five years.

Mr. Hayhoe: The funding of education for nurse teachers over the last five years has been:

	£ million
1981-82	3·8
1982-83	4·1
1983-84	4·2
1984-85	4·0
1985-86*	3·7

* provisional

These figures cover the cost of training qualified nurses to become teachers and a small proportion is for any further training, funded through the English national board, for those nurses who are already qualified teachers. It is not possible readily to identify the equivalent cost for district nurses from those for midwives and health visitors.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will update the answer given on statutory sick pay, 27 April 1984, *Official Report*, columns 627-8.

Mr. Major: The updated information is presented in the table. From September 1984 information can be supplied only on a quarterly rather than a four-weekly basis because of an organisational change within the Department. Additionally, in looking at these figures, it must be appreciated that from September 1984 the Department's inspectors have been concentrating their visiting upon employers who are considered to be at risk. Consequently the errors shown are not representative of employers in general but rather of those who are most likely to make mistakes.

In order that the Department can gauge the level of errors made by employers in general, it is intended that a random selection of employers will be visited towards the end of 1986.

	Employers with fewer than six employees			*Employers with six or more employees*		
	Number of individual cases checked	*of which:*		*Number of individual cases checked*	*of which:*	
		underpaid	*overpaid*		*underpaid*	*overpaid*
In the four weeks ending						
10 April 1984	3,933	364	527	13,099	841	1,198
8 May 1984	2,521	253	300	7,517	542	696
5 June 1984	3,188	291	375	10,225	642	736
3 July 1984	3,179	312	359	9,655	832	812
31 July 1984	2,322	242	271	6,715	530	578
28 August 1984	1,326	114	151	3,554	320	312
In the quarter ending						
18 December 1984	6,300	737	1,022	26,473	3,908	4,565
9 April 1985	5,900	693	798	25,897	2,938	4,338
2 July 1985	3,350	344	483	18,519	1,747	2,829
24 September 1985	2,808	311	399	14,756	1,293	2,531
17 December 1985	2,223	196	297	10,142	1,023	1,567

Benefits (July Uprating)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social services (1) if he will estimate the cost of administration involved in applying the July rise in pensions;

(2) if he will estimate the cost of administration involved in applying the July rise in unemployment benefit;

(3) if he will estimate the cost of administration involved in applying the July rise in child benefit;

(4) if he will estimate the cost of administration involved in the forthcoming changes in *(a)* supplementary benefit and *(b)* supplementary pension levels.

Mr. Newton: The estimated administrative cost of implementing the July benefit uprating is around £16 million. A reliable breakdown of this figure between the different benefits is not available.

Benefit Claimants (Fuel Bills)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if supplementary benefit claimants who have paid their fuel bills for February but meet the conditions for eligibility for the exceptionally severe weather allowance will be allowed to claim the benefit.

Mr. Newton: Claimants who pay their fuel bills before claiming an exceptionally severe weather payment are not eligible for help under regulation 26 of the Single Payments Regulations 1981, although they may in certain circumstances be eligible for help under regulation 28. A copy of the relevant regulations, and of the Chief Adjudication Officer's revised guidance issued on 6 December 1985, is in the Library.

Departmental Office (Regent Street)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled is expected to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby of 13 February on the work of the Westminster office of the Department of Health and Social Security in Regent Street.

Mr. Major: I replied to the hon. Member today.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will reconsider the tests which are applied in cases of claims for mobility allowance in the light of recent decisions taken by the Tribunal of Commissioners and the House of Lords.

Mr. Newton: The decisions to which the hon. Member refers simply clarify existing legislation and earlier decisions by Social Security Commissioners. Any changes to the qualifying criteria for the allowance have to be considered in the light of the resources available and priorities for other social security spending.

Social Security Budget

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list *(a)* the size of the total social security budget in 1979 and at the latest available date and *(b)* to what extent this increase can be accounted for by (i) an increase in real expenditure and (ii) a rise in unemployment.

Mr. Newton: Total expenditure on social security benefits was £15,870 million in 1978-79 and is estimated to be £40,930 million in 1985-86. Of this increase of about £25 billion, some £14 billion is the effect of inflation proofing. Of the remainder, about £5·5 billion reflects real increases in the average amounts of benefit paid, and about £3·75 billion is due to increased numbers of unemployed people receiving benefit.

Prescriptions (Fraud)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list and describe the checks which are made to control fraudulent claiming of exemption status on paying for prescriptions.

Mr. Hayhoe: A proportion of prescription forms bearing declarations that the patient is exempt from charges is sent to every family practitioner committee in respect of prescriptions dispensed in April and October of each year. Family practitioner committees are responsible for checking the validity of these declarations and for recovering any charges that may be due.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the level of fraud in monetary terms arising from fraudulent claiming of exemption from paying for prescriptions.

Mr. Hayhoe: The latest available estimated loss of revenue through incorrect claims for exemption from prescription charges was £4·1 million for the financial year 1984-85.

Hereford and Worcester Ambulance Service

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the financial resources made available to the Hereford and Worcester ambulance authority for each of the years 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86; and if he will give the same figures on a constant price basis.

Mr. Whitney: We allocate funds to the West Midlands regional health authority and it allocates part of these funds to the Worcester and district health authority which manages and provides the Hereford and Worcester ambulance service.

My hon. Friend may wish to approach the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority direct to obtain the information he requires.

Mr. Christopher Herrick

Mr. Ashton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why the claim for industrial injury benefit submitted on 10 November 1985 by Mr. Christopher Herrick of 20 Chapel Walk, Worksop, following an accident last August has not yet been processed; and what action he intends to take.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Press Office (Information)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidelines are issued by the press office of his Department to managers of his Department's local offices in respect of communicating information to journalists.

Mr. Major: Social security local office managers are encouraged to maintain contact with their local press and, within the strict constraints of claimant confidentiality, to provide information about the social security system and the work of their offices.

District Health Authorities (Chairmen)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his reply of 24 March, *Official Report*, column *384*, about the district health authority chairmanships, the various sources included any Conservative party officials and organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Benefits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people currently receive (i) housing benefit and (ii) supplementary benefit broken down into client group and family status categories used in the technical annex to the White Paper, "Reform of Social Security"; and how many receive (i) rent rebate-allowance and (ii) rate rebate broken down into the categories of pensioners, working households with children and working households without children.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 January 1986, c. *309-10*]: Estimates of the numbers receiving supplementary benefit at December 1983, the latest date for which information is available, are given in the table. Similar estimates are not routinely available for housing benefit in the categories requested. The estimates given in the table for housing benefit, therefore, have been made on a similar basis to that described in paragraphs 2.6-2.10 of the technical annex to the White Paper (Cmnd. 9691).

Table 1. Supplementary Benefit and Housing Benefit Caseloads

	Thousands, Great Britain	
	Supplementary Benefit (December 1983)	*Housing Benefit (November 1985)*
Client Group		
All groups	4,349	6,580
Pensioners age 80+	449	720

	Thousands, Great Britain	
	Supplementary Benefit (December 1983)	*Housing Benefit (November 1985)*
Pensioners age 60-79	1,382	3,190
Sick or disabled	294	210
Lone parents	466	570
Couples with children		
—in full-time work	—	370
—not in full-time work	462	520
Others		
—in full-time work	—	220
—not in full-time work	1,386	770
Family Status		
All families	4,349	6,580
Pensioners		
—single	1,446	2,610
—couples	385	1,310
Non-pensioners with children		
—lone parents	474	580
—couples	485	940
Non-pensioners without children		
—single age 25 and over	635	640
—single age under 25	774	210
—couples	151	290

Table 2. Housing Benefit Caseload by Rebate Type, November 1985

	Thousands, Great Britain	
	Rent rebate/ allowance	*Rate rebate*
Pensioners	2,520	3,770
Working households with children	240	400
Working households without children	160	150
Others	1,520	1,950
All households	4,430	6,260

Notes to tables

(1) Estimates for supplementary benefit are derived from the 1983 Annual Statistical Enquiry.

(2) Estimates for housing benefit are rounded to the nearest 10,000 and consequently totals may not equal exactly the sum of their component parts.

(3) The housing benefit estimates are not adjusted for differential take-up.

(4) The total housing benefit caseload implied by this methodology is somewhat different from that derived from local authority subsidy claims (as published in the Public Expenditure White Paper), which reflect local authorities' forward estimates for a full year.

Disabled People

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of totals and age ranges for *(a)* registered disabled persons *(b)* registered mobility allowance holders; and what projections of future trends have been made in each case.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 January 1986, c.*509*]: Information on the numbers of persons registered with Social Services Departments as physically or sensorily handicapped is collected triennially and the latest available data are given in the table.

England
Number of registered handicapped
Number of persons registered by age

		Under 16		*16-64*				
Type of registration	*Registration category*	*0-4*	*5-15*	*16-49*	*50-64*	*65-74*	*75+*	*Total*
As at 31 March 1982								
Blind and Partially sighted*	Blind	275	1,709	11,471	13,422	19,376	64,576	111,729
	Partially sighted	165	2,062	8,662	5,635	9,417	32,062	58,003
	Total	440	3,771	20,133	19,057	28,793	97,538	169,732
As at 31 March 1983								
Deaf and Hard of hearing*	Deaf with speech	1,663		6,345	2,421	2,079	3,605	16,113
	Deaf without speech	1,663		7,887	2,733	1,848	1,591	15,722
	Hard of hearing	1,648		5,032	4,950	11,044	24,505	47,179
	Total	4,974		19,264	10,104	14,971	29,701	79,014
As at 31 March 1984								
General classes*†	Very severely handicapped	5,822		26,896		15,517	23,369	71,604
	Severely handicapped	7,370		151,465		118,145	177,431	454,411
	Other	7,442		190,025		150,078	228,990	576,535
	Total	20,634		368,386		283,740	429,790	1,102,550

* Includes persons multiply handicapped and therefore on other registers.
† But excludes persons on the Register of the Blind.

The reliability of registration as a guide to the incidence of disability is affected by the fact that registration is voluntary and also by uncertainties about the regularity with which authorities review and update their records. Projections of future trends are not made centrally.

The available information for registered mobility allowance holders as at 20 January 1986 is set out in the following table. Reliable forecasts for future years by reference to age are not available. Table 3.15.6 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1986-87 to 1988-89"

(Cmnd. 9702) shows the estimated average number of recipients during the years 1986-87 and 1987-88 as 450,000 and 495,000 respectively.

Number of Mobility Allowance Recipients in Great Britain Analysed by age

Age	*Number*
Under 20	28,239
20-24	11,951
25-29	11,058
30-34	12,852
35-39	19,339
40-44	22,083
45-49	28,828
50-54	41,418
55-59	63,728
60-64	91,974
65-69	66,260
70 and over	10,502
Total	408,232

Disease Statistics

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has broken down by numbers, ages, sex, regional basis etc. of polio victims, brittle bone sufferers, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, Parkinson's disease and spinal injuries.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply* 28 January 1986, c. *511*]: The available information for the diseases referred to and the relevant international classification of diseases codes is given in the tables. The tables giving estimated number of discharges and deaths are based on the Hospital Inpatient Inquiry, a 10 per cent. sample of records from National Health Service non-psychiatric hospitals. In addition, a regional breakdown of deaths from multiple sclerosis and from Parkinson's disease has been published by the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys in "Mortality Statistics: area series DH5 No. 11 1984", copies of which are in the Library.

	Number
1973	5
1974	6
1975	3
1976	13
1977	16
1978	3
1979	8
1980	3
1981	2
1982	2
1983	4
1984	—
1985	*4

* Provisional.

Estimated number of discharges and deaths, NHS non-psychiatric hospitals—England 1983

ICD code and diagnosis	*All ages*	*Age-group 0-4*	*5-14*	*15-44*	*45-64*	*65-74*	*75-84*	*85 and over*
332 Parkinson's disease								
Males	6,040	*	*	†30	700	1,840	2,760	710
Females	6,500	*	†10	†40	730	1,750	2,930	1,040
340 Multiple sclerosis								
Males	3,070	*	*	1,140	1,520	350	†60	*
Females	5,440	*	†10	2,160	2,590	450	230	*
733.0 Osteoporosis								
Males	350	*	*	†40	†50	†70	†60	†130
Females	1,470	*	*	†20	†190	320	620	320
805 Fracture of vertebral column without mention of spinal cord lesion								
Males	2,540	†20	†60	1,610	530	†140	†110	†70
Females	1,910	*	†50	560	350	280	440	230

* Age-groups where there are no cases in the sample.
† Figures are based on small sample numbers and should be treated with caution.

Estimated number of discharges and deaths, NHS non-psychiatric hospitals—England 1983

ICD code and diagnosis	*Males*	*Females*	*Total*
045 Acute poliomyelitis	*30	*50	*80
138 Late effects of acute poliomyelitis	*30	*150	*180
359 Muscular dystrophies and other myopathies	770	350	1,120
756.5 Osteodystrophies	*160	*110	*270
806 Fracture of vertebral column with spinal cord lesion	440	*150	590
907.2 Late effect of spinal cord injury	360	*30	390
952 Spinal cord lesion without evidence of spinal bone injury	270	*140	410

Note: Sample numbers are too small to permit an estimate of distribution by age group.
* Figures are based on small numbers and should be treated with caution.

Death registrations, males and females, England, 1984

ICD code	Diagnosis		All ages	Age group 0-4	5-14	15-44	45-64	65-74	75-84	85+
138	Late effects of acute poliomylutis	M	15	0	0	0	7	4	4	0
		F	20	0	0	4	6	3	4	3
359	Muscular dystrophies and other myopathies	M	152	7	11	78	26	16	12	2
		F	51	6	3	5	20	9	7	1
332	Parkinson's disease	M	1,797	0	0	1	60	447	959	330
		F	1,631	0	0	1	48	286	841	455
340	Multiple sclerosis	M	313	0	0	44	159	83	27	0
		F	502	0	0	81	258	108	48	7
733·0	Osteoprosis	M	244	0	0	0	2	33	120	89
		F	904	0	0	0	10	48	337	509
756·5	Osteodystrophies	M	10	8	0	2	0	0	0	0
		F	16	9	0	1	3	1	2	0
805	Fracture of vertebral column without mention of spinal cord lesion	M	174	4	12	73	29	24	25	7
		F	117	4	4	20	10	27	31	21
806	Fracture of vertebral column with spinal cord lesion	M	47	2	9	18	9	3	5	1
		F	31	1	2	7	5	6	6	4
907·2	Late effect of spinal cord injury	M	20	0	1	2	12	3	2	0
		F	9	0	1	3	5	0	0	0
952	Spinal cord lesion without evidence of spinal bone injury	M	25	0	1	8	6	7	1	2
		F	14	0	1	4	3	0	4	2

Dewsbury DHA

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he is satisfied with the discharge of its functions by the Dewsbury district health authority;

(2) for what reasons the services of Mr. Sam Lyles as chairman of the Dewsbury district health authority are being terminated.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 March 1986, *c. 65*]: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) on 26 March.

WALES

Housing Defects

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether all local authority bids for funding under the Housing Defects Act have been met in full by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Local authority bids for expenditure under the Housing Defects Act were met in full for 1985-86 and for 1986-87 by means of separately identified HSIP allocations.

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Cardiff, North on 27 November 1985, *Official Report*, column *581*, what further information is necessary to enable him to decide whether a higher expenditure limit under the Housing Defects Act is necessary.

Mr. Mark Robinson: We are at present costing the various types of reinstatement schemes which are becoming available.

NHS (Waiting Lists)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to seek to overcome the problem of a six months waiting list for National Health Service treatment for certain conditions at Ysbyty Gwynedd and Bangor.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The management of waiting lists is a matter for the district health authority. However, to assist authorities in this area the Department has asked them to validate their inpatient waiting lists. On 9 April a workshop will be held with all nine authorities and a group of experts to help identify problems, the reasons for them and develop solutions. Progress will be monitored in the process of the annual review of performance of all district health authorities.

Care Concern Centre, Llangwyfan

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set up an inquiry into the management of the care concern centre for mentally handicapped people at Llangwyfan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Clwyd county council is responsible for registring and inspecting Care Concern, Llangwyfan, under the Registered Homes Act 1984. I have asked the county council for a report and will write to the hon. Gentleman once it has been considered.

Junior Hospital Doctors

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the numbers of unfilled junior hospital doctor posts in each of the health authorities in Wales in

each of the recognised specialty departments; and how many posts have been unfilled for three months, six months and longer than six months, respectively.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The required information is not available centrally.

Cold Weather (Deaths)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of the numbers of people who died as a result of the cold weather in Wales in January, February and March, respectively.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: There are no official estimates of the number of people who die as the result of cold weather in Wales. Of all deaths registered in Wales in January and February 1986, hypothermia was mentioned in four and 13 cases, respectively. Figures are provisional and include cases where hypothermia was not recorded as the underlying cause of death. March figures are not yet available.

Retired People

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people there were in Wales over the age of retirement in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Mid year estimates of population made by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys give 508,800 and 530,900 as the numbers over pensionable age in Wales in 1979 and 1984 respectively. The comparable figure for 1985 is not yet available.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the percentage change in the number of people in Wales over the age of retirement in the last 20 years.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Between 1964 and 1984 the number of people over retirement age increased by 29·7 per cent., from 409,400 to 530,900.

Disabled People

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many registered disabled people there are in *(a)* Alyn and Deeside and *(b)* Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The figure for Wales was 119,091 at 31 March 1985. The information is not disaggregated to district council level.

Nursery Places

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many children under the age of five years there are in Wales; and how many nursery places there are.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: According to the latest estimates made by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, there were 177,900 children aged under five in 1984. A total of 20,515 places were available at day nurseries and playgroups in 1984 and 21,264 in 1985. Information is not available on the number of nursery places in schools: but in January 1984 the number of pupils aged under five in the previous August attending schools was 61,629, and in January 1985, 62,858.

Residential Homes

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to seek to change the requirements for registering residential homes for the elderly and nursing homes in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The fees payable for the registration and inspection of residential care and nursing homes will be increased on 1 April 1986 with the coming into effect of the Residential Care Homes (Amendment) Regulations 1986 and the Nursing Homes and Mental Nursing Homes (Amendment) Regulations 1986 (SI Nos. 457/1986 and 456/1986). The Residential Care Homes (Amendment) Regulations 1986 also make a few other minor amendments to the existing regulations.

The Department will shortly be issuing additional guidance to health and local authorities on certain aspects of the registration and inspection of residential care and nursing homes.

Informal Carers

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of the number of informal carers *(a)* in Wales and *(b)* in Alyn and Deeside.

Mr. Mark Robinson: There are no estimates available centrally.

Orthopaedic Operations

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average length of time patients have to wait for orthopaedic operations in Welsh hospitals.

Mr. Mark Robinson: In 1984, the latest year for which information is available, the average length of time on the waiting list for orthopaedic operations was 164 days.

Industrial Production

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales, taking 1979 as a base year, what has been the yearly index of industrial production in *(a)* the manufacturing sector, *(b)* the construction industry and *(c)* both sectors together for each year in (i) Wales, (ii) Scotland and (iii) the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The index of production for Wales is, at present, based on the year 1980. To rebase this index accurately to 1979 would incur disproportionate cost. Press notices are produced quarterly on the index and an historical series is contained in *Welsh Economic Trends*, and they are both available in the House of Commons Library.

Indices of production for Scotland and the United Kingdom are also published in press notices which are available in the House of Commons Library.

Nurses (Accommodation)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will consider compensating nurses who have been required to leave their nurses' homes as a result of the Government's policy of disposing of National Health Service property in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Government policy is to dispose only of surplus NHS property. There is no automatic

requirement to provide staff residences except in the case of some junior doctors. Health authorities, however, have discretion to provide residential accommodation for certain staff groups, including nurses, as deemed necessary in local circumstances.

Ambulance Service

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the recommended national ambulance call-out reaction time.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The recommended standards for ambulance services within Wales are that 50 per cent. of emergency calls should have a response within eight minutes of the call being received and 95 per cent. within 20 minutes.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average ambulance call-out reaction time in Caernarfon, Bangor and Llandudno to calls for ambulance service during the hours of 6 pm to 8 am.

Mr. Mark Robinson: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average ambulance call-out reaction time in response to ambulance call-outs from Bala ambulance station, from Dolgellau station and Barmouth station to calls for ambulance service during the hours of 6 pm to 8 am.

Mr. Mark Robinson: This information is not available centrally.

Welsh National Opera Company

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) whether he will make special financial provision for the Welsh National Opera to allow it to visit a greater number of venues in Wales and to spend more time performing in Wales in general;

(2) whether he will take special measures to alleviate the current financial problems which face the Welsh National Opera Company.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Funding of the Welsh National Opera's activities in Wales is a matter for the Welsh Arts Council.

Singleton Hospital

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for Wales on what date and by whom it was first officially proposed by Her Majesty's Government or the West Glamorgan health authority that the casualty unit at Singleton hospital should be closed.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The transfer of the major accident service from Singleton to Morriston was approved by the then Secretary of State in April 1977 and the provision of a minor casualty unit at Singleton was the subject of the health authority's planning policies from that time until May 1985, when the health authority made a proposal to abandon that commitment which my right hon. Friend was unable to accept.

Dr. K. Featherstone

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether any work is being or has been undertaken for his Department by Dr. K. Featherstone of Stirling university.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: No.

Student Grants

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table indicating for each local education authority in Wales what range of maintenance grants are paid to help students from their area undertake non-degree courses at technical colleges.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Mandatory awards are available to help students attend designated courses: these include some non-degree courses such as those leading to a diploma of higher education or a BTEC higher national diploma. Details of the value of these awards for the current academic year are contained in the Department of Education and Science publication "Grants to Students —A Brief Guide 1985-86".

Local education authorities also have powers to make discretionary awards to support students on other courses. Any amounts paid under these powers are at the discretion of the individual local authority.

Departmental Jobs

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish an analysis by function of the jobs that were lost from his Department between 1 July 1979 and 1 July 1985.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On the dates concerned permanent staff in my Department were deployed as follows:

Function	*1 July 1979*	*1 July 1985*	*Difference*
Agriculture, fisheries and food	698	543½	−154½
Industry, energy, trade, employment and tourism	90½	*159½	+69
Roads and transport	292	241	−51
Housing	66	57	−9
Other environmental services	340	293½	−46½
Education science arts and libraries	124	109½	−14½
Health and personal social services	323½	249½	−74
Management advisory and support	661	622½	−38½
	2,595	2,276	−319

* 81 posts transferred from Department of Trade and Industry in 1984 together with the administration of Regional Development Grants.

The allocation of staff is kept under constant review as functional requirements change.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the amounts in constant terms for each of the last 10 years for which figures were available for expenditure on education in *(a)* the maintained sector and *(b)* the private sector, in Wales, both expressed in total and per

pupil; and if he will also express the figures for the private sector as a percentage of the figures for the maintained sector.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Information is not collected about total expenditure on education in the private sector.

In the maintained sector, the bulk of the expenditure is incurred by local education authorities. The relevant figures (comprising both current and capital expenditure) for spending by local authorities in Wales, with expenditure on the schools sector shown separately and in terms of provision per pupil, are as follows (at 1984-85 prices using the GDP deflators).

	Total (Net) Expenditure on Education £ million	*Expenditure in the Schools sector £ million*	*Expenditure in the Schools Sector per pupil* £*
1975-76	767·5	614·7	1,103
1976-77	748·7	598·2	1,072
1977-78	689·7	551·5	994
1978-79	697·7	557·9	1,018
1979-80	674·6	541·5	1,006
1980-81	694·3	550·2	1,048
1981-82	686·5	542·5	1,060
1982-83	691·7	544·3	1,091
1983-84	731·6	572·3	1,168
1984-85	688·3	538·0	1,114

* Pupil numbers at January in each year.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Social Security Commissioner for Wales

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Attorney-General (1) whether he has any plans to review the status of the post of Social Security Commissioner for Wales;

(2) if the Lord Chancellor has any plans to abolish the adminstrative office of the Social Security Commissioner for Wales.

The Attorney-General: Consultations are in progress on a proposal to discontinue the administrative functions of the Cardiff office of social security commissioners and the permanent location of a commissioner there. No final decision has been taken. It is in any event the Lord Chancellor's intention that hearings will continue to take place in Cardiff.

THE ARTS

South Bank Board

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts if he was consulted about the appointment of South Bank Board members.

Mr. Luce: Yes.

National Youth Orchestra

Mr. Freud asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the financial resources available to the National Youth Orchestra for the forthcoming financial year; and if he will list the representations he has received in respect of the future of the orchestra.

Mr. Luce: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Thamesday

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts if Lambeth borough council was invited to the meeting held on 24 March at the Arts Council to discuss the future of Thamesday.

Mr. Luce: No. The South Bank Board has sought discussions with Lambeth borough council on several previous occasions, but without success.

Jubilee Gardens

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts when he expects the lease to be agreed between the London Residuary Body and the South Bank Board in respect of Jubilee Gardens.

Mr. Luce: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Pornographic Video Tapes

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will issue guidelines to procurators fiscal regarding prosecution policy in relation to the rental of pornographic video tapes; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Procurators fiscal are aware of the standard of obscenity which merits prosecution in cases involving the sale or rental of obscene video cassettes. The only instruction which has been issued to procurators fiscal in this connection is that where an offence could be dealt with under the Video Recordings Act 1984, proceedings should not be taken at common law for offences of obscenity or indecency, or under section 51 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, without express instructions from Crown counsel. My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate does not intend to issue any further instructions at this time in connection with cases involving obscene video cassettes.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many prosecutions have taken place in the years 1983 to 1985 and in 1986 to date against persons who have allegedly supplied pornographic video tapes to shops in Scotland.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: It is not possible to obtain the information sought from the statistics which are kept.

SCOTLAND

Housing (Waiting Lists)

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of people on Scottish Special Housing Association waiting lists at 31 March in each of the years 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Ancram: No meaningful total can be provided as the SSHA houses tenants nominated predominantly from district council waiting lists.

Housing Action Areas

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will make a decision on the Woodlands (Maryhill Road number 1) housing action area for improvement.

Mr. Ancram: Glasgow district council will be advised shortly of my right hon. and learned Friend's decision.

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many houses in draft housing action areas for improvement have had to be demolished since 1979 during the period when a decision was awaited from Government or a Government agency; and what information he has as to the financial loss suffered by home owners as a result of such demolitions.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is not held centrally.

Prisoners (Deaths)

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prisoners died in prisons in Scotland during each of the past five years for which records are available; what ages were the deceased; how many of such deaths were from natural causes; how many were from terminal illnesses; and, in respect of these, when he was notified that the prisoner was suffering from a terminal illness.

Mr. John MacKay: The numbers and ages of prisoners who died in penal establishments in Scotland in each of the past five years are as follows. Deaths from natural causes are indicated by an asterisk. None of the deaths was from a terminal illness. The figures do not include prisoners who died following transfer to an NHS hospital or following early release on medical grounds.

1981 Four aged 17, 18, 24, 31.
1982 Four aged 18, 19, 19, 42*.
1983 Seven aged 18, 20, 26, 31, 34, 36, 55.
1984 Six aged 17, 27, 35, 39, 48, 48*.
1985 Ten aged 16, 17, 25, 26, 28*, 32, 38, 44*, 47, 49*.

Cattle (Abortions)

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department collects statistics on abortions in cattle and the causes if determined for such abortions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Under the terms of the Brucellosis (Scotland) Order 1979 all bovine abortions or premature calvings are required to be notified to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland. A total of 4,168 notifications were received in 1985. This compared with 4,160 in 1984 and 4,335 in 1983. Subsequent investigations by the state veterinary service, which are confined to testing for brucellosis, proved negative in all cases.

Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the bodies and individuals who have submitted representations on the report of the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council; which of these commented on the recommendation regarding colleges of education; whether any supported the council's recommendation on the colleges; when he expects to announce the result of the consultation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The bodies and individuals who had commented on the report by 25 March are listed below, those commenting on the recommendation regarding colleges of education being indicated with an asterisk. Although the majority of respondents oppose the recommendation, some have supported it. Decisions on those recommendations which are directed at the Government will be announced after due consideration has been given to all the views expressed.

Responses to the STEAC Report had been received from the following organisations and individuals by 25 March 1986.

1. *Organisations*

Advisory Council for the Arts in Scotland.
Association of Directors of Recreation, Leisure and Tourism.*
Association of Lecturers in Colleges of Education.*
Association for Scottish Literary Studies.
Ayr Teachers and Students.*
The Biochemical Society.
Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley Labour Party.*
Catholic Education Commission.*
Church Leaders Forum.
City of Edinburgh District Council; Department of Administration.*
Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals.
Corsehill Primary School.*
Council for National Academic Awards.
The Cramond Association.*
Dundee College of Education.*
Dundee College of Technology.
Edinburgh and District Trades Council.*
Galston Primary School.*
General Assembly of the Church of Scotland: Committee on Education.*
Glasgow College of Technology.*
Grampian Regional Council: Department of Education.*
Grampian Regional Council: Department of Social Work.*
Grampian Region Primary Head Teachers' Council.*
Grampian Region Secondary Head Teachers Association.*
Heriot-Watt University.
Heriot-Watt University Students' Association.*
Institution of Electrical Engineers.
Irvine Primary Schools Head Teachers Association.*
Jordanhill College of Education.*
Kingcase Kirk Session.*
Manpower Services Commission.
Motherwell District Council.*
Napier College of Commerce and Technology.
National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education.*
The National Union of Students.*
The Open University.
Paisley College of Technology.
Presbytery of Ayr, Church of Scotland.*
Principals of the East of Scotland Tertiary Sector.
Queen Margaret College.
Robert Gordon's Institute of Technology.
Rotary Club of Prestwick.*
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.
Scottish College of Textiles.
Scottish Council for the Validation of Courses for Teachers.
Scottish Health Service: Common Services Agency.
Scottish Library Association.
Scottish Trades Union Congress.*
Scottish Universities Council on Entrance.
Scottish Vocational Education Council.
SRC Glasgow University.*
St. Andrew's College of Education.*
Telford College Students Association.*
University of Edinburgh.
University Grants Committee.
University of Strathclyde.*
University of Strathclyde Students Association.*
Voluntary Services Aberdeen.*

2. *Individuals*

Allan, A. I. C. G.*
Armstrong, R.*
Atkins, G. E.*

Beveridge, Professor G. S. G.
Black, M.*
Bowie, S.*
Bowman, M.*
Bowman, M.*
Brightman, J.*
Bull, F. G.*
Carroll, J.*
Chessell, G.*
Convery, L.*
Davidson, A. K.*
Davidson, Dr. C. W.*
Davies, J. K.*
Davison, P.*
Dickson, A.*
Dixen, G.*
Farmer, R. K.*
Farquharson, A. E.*
Farrow, S. I.*
Forbes, E.*
Gilson, C. C.*
Gordon, I.*
Hall, I.*
Hewitson, J. E.*
Holliday, Professor F. G. T.
Honigmann, F. J. R.*
Hunter, M. H.*
Jamieson, K.*
Jodeluk, C.*
Knox, M. A.*
The Lord Provost of Dundee.*
Loy, B.*
Macdonald, F.*
Macdonald, K.*
Mackay, C. A.*
Macleod, J.*
Melville, R.*
Moreland, J. D.*
Morgan, Professor H. G.
Munro, I.*
Oxtoby, P. J.*
Paton, J. C.*
Perratt, F. M. F.*
Porter, J.*
Roach, A. C. and Sinclair, R. S.
Robertson, B.*
Rodger, A. M.*
Ross, R. A.*
Sleight, M.*
Smith, C. M. C.*
Sparkes, R. A.*
Stefani, R. A.*
Stenhouse, G.*
Stevenson, A. A.*
Sutherland, S.*
Thompson, M.*
Turnbull, Dr. H.*
Weir, L.*
Williams, C.*

In addition, a number of Members of Parliament have made representations on behalf of particular constituents or organisations.

Crofter Housing Grant and Loan Scheme

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the crofter housing grant and loan scheme; what representations he has received about the present levels of financial assistance it provides; and if he will increase the sums available to take account of the effect of inflation since the last revision in 1982.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 26 March to the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart). The revised rates of assistance fully reflect movements in building costs since 1982. I believe the scheme continues to be a necessary and effective means of raising the standard of crofter housing.

Student Fees

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will announce the fees to be charged to students attending Scottish institutions other than universities in the academic year 1986-87

Mr. Rifkind: For the academic year 1986-87, I have prescribed the following fee levels for home students and for students from other European Community countries on full-time advanced courses in the central institutions and colleges of education (fees for 1985-86 are shown in brackets):

	Fee levels	
Postgraduate courses	£1,680	(£1,632)
Undergraduate and equivalent courses	£536	(£520)

Fees for home and other European Community students on courses at local authority colleges are the responsibility of the local authorities. I understand that the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has decided to recommend fees as follows:

	Fee levels	
Postgraduate courses	£1,680	(£1,632)
Advanced full-time courses	£536	(£520)
Non-advanced full-time courses	£325	(£265)

For overseas students the Government's policy is that students should pay fees that cover the cost of their education. Local authorities and institutions are free to determine the fees to be charged in accordance with that policy, and in the light of their own circumstances.

I understand that the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has decided to recommend to local authorities the following fees for students at local authority colleges paying the overseas rate who began their courses on or after 1 September 1980:

Advanced courses	£3,540
Non-advanced courses	£1,947

Land Reclamation

Mr. Eadie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money was spent by the Government, local authorities and the National Coal Board on land reclamation in Scotland in 1975 and every year until 1985; and what acreage of land was reclaimed by each body.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January 1986, c. *370-371*]: Overall responsibility for the rehabilitation of land in Scotland rests with the Scottish Development Agency. Figures for the agency are as follows:

Year	*Amount* £	*Acreage*
1975-76	8,000	0
1976-77	993,000	4·5
1977-78	13,005,000	189
1978-79	19,136,000	981
1979-80	24,611,000	1,144
1980-81	27,582,000	3,386
1981-82	19,876,000	1,621

Year	Amount £	Acreage
1982-83	24,793,000	6,063
1983-84	22,926,000	1,448
1984-85	25,016,000	793
1985-86 (to date)	21,789,000	355

No grant-aided reclamation has been undertaken by the NCB in Scotland during the period 1975-85; the NCB normally release redundant colliery sites to local authorities for reclamation. However, I understand from the board that during the past 10 years, some 267 hectares of derelict land has been reclaimed following opencast operations.

Crime Statistics

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many crimes of violence have taken place in Scotland in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 March 1986]: The figures for 1975 to 1984 are set out below. Figures for 1985 are not yet available.

Recorded Crimes of Violence: Scotland

	Number
1975	9,946
1976	10,864
1977	11,181
1978	11,226
1979	11,279
1980	12,347
1981	13,419
1982	13,222
1983	14,285
1984	15,181

Note: The figures include all non-sexual crimes of violence (Group 1 of the standard crime classification), rape, assault with intent to rape, indecent assault and assault to commit unnatural crimes.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Labelling

Mr. Pike asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received about the regulations concerning the labelling of food; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: I regularly receive comments and inquiries from many sources on a wide range of labelling matters. We are currently consulting interested organisations on proposals for the fat content labelling of foods and on guidelines for the nutrition labelling of foods.

Organo-chlorine Residues

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what levels of organo-chlorine residues have been detected in rabbit, processed pork and poultry imported from the People's Republic of China; and what progress is presently being made in discussions between the Governments of the United Kingdom and the People's Republic of China in attempting to detect the source of chemical compounds in meat products in China.

Mrs. Fenner: The hon. Member will find the information requested in the report of the working party on pesticide residues (1982 to 1985) which was published on 4 March this year and is available in the Library of the House. The Chinese authorities were alerted to the working party's findings in April 1985 and officials from the state veterinary service visited the People's Republic of China in August 1985 and made recommendations for establishing a monitoring system for contaminants. Following further contacts between officials we are making arrangements for experts of both countries to meet to determine the cause of the contamination.

Potatoes

Mr. Harris asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many registered growers planted potatoes in excess of quota in 1985 and by how many hectares; and how many planted below quota, and by how many hectares.

Mr. Jopling: The information requested is not available from Government records. The administration of the potato quota arrangements and the collection of information about the levels of plantings by registered producers are matters for the Potato Marketing Board.

EC (Regulation No. 765/86)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what sales have been authorised by the Commission in terms of Commission regulation (EEC) No. 765/86 of 14 March; if he will specify the price, amount and country of destination of each sale; if he will further explain which countries are covered by the definition Zone C2(i) in the regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

EC (Price Review)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress was made in the Council of Ministers on the issue of the price review at the meeting on 24 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave on 26 March 1986 to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan)

EC (Dairy Produce)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if the Commission has authority under its regulation No. 765/86 to sell butter to Zone C2(i) countries at prices lower than the minimum prescribed under the general agreement on tariffs and trade; if any instructions have been given to the Commission by the Council of Ministers on this matter; and if he will make a statment;

(2) if the Commission sought the agreement of the Council of Ministers to its decision not to publish the rates of subsidy for exports of dairy products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Badgers

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions his officials have had with the members of the Dunnet committee on that committee's draft report on badgers and bovine tuberculosis; what requests for redrafting of the report have been made to the committee by his officials and for what reasons; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: No such discussions have been held with Professor Dunnet and his team and no such requirements have been put to them. The aim has always been that Professor Dunnet and his colleagues should produce an independent report. Any suggestion that anything has been said or done by my Department to infringe their freedom in this regard in entirely without foundation.

DEFENCE

Army Support Buildings and Facilities (Devon)

Sir Peter Mills asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy that any new support buildings and facilities required by the Army in Devon should be outside the Dartmoor national park.

Mr. Lee: No. However, any new facilities required in connection with service training on Dartmoor will continue to be the subject of full consultation with the Dartmoor national park authority.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to the development of a strategic defence initiative for the European part of the Alliance.

Mr. Norman Lamont: None. The strategic defence initiative is a United States research programme to determine the feasibility of establishing an effective system of defence against ballistic missile attack. The United States Government have made clear that the research programme is designed to enhance Allied security as well as United States security.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the specific arrangements outlined in the memorandum of understanding on the strategic defence initiative which cover the following issues *(a)* security procedure, *(b)* administration of contracts, *(c)* limitations to the memorandum of understanding, *(d)* the right for Anglo-American partners within the strategic defence initiative programme to attend conferences together, *(e)* the arrangements which must be made for face-to-face meetings, *(f)* any other administrative procedures with a bearing on security or on the classification of research and development work, *(g)* intellectual property rights, *(h)* national and international trade laws and *(i)* the requirement for Government guarantees to underwrite strategic defence initiative research.

Mr. Norman Lamont: As the Government have stated on a number of occasions recently the content of the memorandum of understanding and supporting administrative documentation related to British participation in the strategic defence initiative research programme is confidential.

Military Lands Acts (Byelaws)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all sites in the United Kingdom for which byelaws had been made or proposed under the Military Lands Acts (i) since 1956 and prior to 31 December 1983, (ii) between 1 January 1984 and 31 December 1985, and (iii) since 1 January 1986.

Mr. Lee: The following byelaws have been made under the Military Lands Acts since 1956 and prior to 31 December 1983:

1983
Ash Ranges
Kibworth Ranges
Purfleet Ranges

1982
Longmoor Ranges and Demolition Training Area
Proof and Experimental Establishment, Eskmeals
Tregantle Ranges

1981
HM Naval Base Portsmouth
Proof and Experimental Establishment, Pendine (Amendment)
Salisbury Plain Military Lands
Warcop Principal Training Area

1980
Okehampton Range
Otmoor Range
Otterburn Training Area (Amendment)
Willsworthy Range

1979
Merrivale Range

1978
Surrey Commons Military Lands

1977
Bicester Garrison
Cowden
Porton and Winterbourne Gunner
Salisbury Plain Area (Amendment)

1976
Aberporth Range
Aldershot and District Military Lands
Catterick Garrison Military Lands
Cwm Gwdi Range
Dover and District Military Lands
Feldom Range
Shorncliffe and District Military Lands
Whitburn Range
Yantlet Demolition Range

1975
British Underwater Test and Evaluation Centre
Stanford Training Area (Amendent)

1974
Caterham Barracks
Finringhoe Range
Grafham Range
Sennybridge Training Area

1973
Barry Buddon Ranges
Colchester and District Military Lands
Faslane, Coulport and Rhu Narrows Byelaws 1971 (Amendment)
Holcombe Ranges
Proof and Experimental Establishment, Pendine
Whittington Ranges

1972
Bellerby Moor and Wathgill Ranges
Sealand Ranges

1971
Dockyard Port of Rosyth
Faslane, Coulport and Rhu Narrows
Otterburn Training area

1970
Bulford Range
Stanford Training Area

1969
Chilcomb Range
Perham Down Range

1967
Lydden Spout
Nesscliff Grenade Range

1966
Coyner Teynham Rifle Range
Hythe Ranges
Penally Ranges
Wrekin Ranges

1965
Abbotsinch Airport (No. 2)
Inverness (Dalcross) Aerodrome
Prestwick Airport (Amendment) (No. 3)
Larkhill Artillery Ranges
Powclair
Whittington Grenade

1964
Abbotsinch Airport
Middlewick Ranges
Purfleet and Rainham Ranges
Sumburgh Aerodrome
Belfast (Aldergrove) Civil Air Terminal

1963
Bulford Ranges
Imber Ranges
Kithurst Ranges
Milton Ranges
Okehampton Ranges
Royal Air Force Burtonwood

1962
Edinburgh (Turnhouse) (Amendment)
Prestwick (Amendment) (No. 2)

1961
Edinburgh (Turnhouse) Airport

1960
Hampton Lovett Range
Moody's Down Range
Prestwick Airport (Amendment)
Loch Long Torpedo Range

1959
Langport Range
Woolwich
Royal Radar Establishment (Porshore Airfield)

The following byelaws have been made after 1 January 1984 and before 31 December 1985:

1985
Upper Hulme Range
RAF Greenham Common
RAF Molesworth
RAF Alconbury

1984
British Underwater Test and Evaluation Centre
Bellerby Moor and Wathgill Ranges

The following byelaws have been made since 1 January 1986:

Faslane, Coulport and Rhu Narrows
HMS Forest Moor and Menwith Hill Station
RAF Lakenheath
RAF Mildenhall

The following byelaws have been proposed, but not yet made, since 1 January 1986:

Dockyard Port of Rosyth
Holy Loch
RAF Upper Heyford
RAF St. Mawgan
RAF Brawdy
RAF Burtonwood
RAF Caerwent
RAF Waddington
Aircraft and Armament Experimental Establishment
Boscombe Down
Atomic Weapons Research Establishment Aldermaston
Royal Ordnance Factory Burghfield
Royal Ordnance Factory Cardiff

In addition, byelaws for RAC Range Castlemartin were proposed in 1985, but have not yet been made.

Youth Training

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate how many YTS places will be taken up by his Department during the current year.

Mr. Lee: In 1985-86 the Ministry of Defence offered 1,126 places on the civilian YTS and, by the end of February, 672 places had been allocated. The armed services YTS, which runs parallel to but separate from the civilian scheme, offered some 2,200 places in 1985-86 of which 1,006 had been allocated by the end of February 1986.

Battlefield Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has for the modernisation of Britain's contribution to NATO battlefield nuclear weapons.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) on 20 January, at columns *90-91*, and to the communiqúe issued at the NATO nuclear planning group's meeting in March, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

HMS Dreadnought

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on future uses for HMS Dreadnought now situated at Her Majesty's Rosyth naval base.

Mr. Lee: HMS Dreadnought has been taken out of service and is laid up at Rosyth. No future uses are planned for the vessel. Plans for her final disposal have not yet been drawn up.

Commercial Management

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will update his calculations of the annual cost to the defence budget of the introduction of commercial management; and if he will list the consequential annual cost or charges to his Department for the following items *(a)* redundancies, *(b)* pension arrangements, *(c)* staff costs for supervisory organisations within the dockyards, *(d)* value added tax contributions, *(e)* efficiency savings and *(f)* supply facilities for stocks and spares.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Warship Propellers

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his procurement policy for warships' propellers; what percentage have been purchased abroad; and what percentage was purchased in the United Kingdom in each of the last six years.

Mr. Lee: The policy for the procurement of Defence equipment, including propellers, is contained in the publication "Value for Money in Defence Equipment Procurement", Defence Open Government Document 83/01, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

All contracts placed by the Ministry of Defence in the past six years for propellers for warships have been placed with United Kingdom manufacturers or through United Kingdom shipbuilders. The Ministry of Defence does not require contractors to notify their sources for lower value subcontracts and we cannot therefore determine what portion of work is undertaken overseas.

Arms Sales (Middle East)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the scale of expenditure of Her Majesty's Government used to aid arms sales in the middle east, for each of the financial years 1982 to date.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Net expenditure attributable to the middle east (including North Africa) is as follows, covering the costs of staff specifically concerned with the support of sales of defence equipment to this region and the waiver of training costs in support of such sales:

	£ million
1984-85	0·530
1985-86	*1·044

* Estimated

Figures for earlier years are not readily available. The above totals exclude the costs of other staff whose activities cannot be apportioned by areas of the world and of embassy staff who cannot be apportioned to sales of defence equipment, and expenses on visits by potential customers and on activities which are financed by charges to exporters or customers. The net costs to Her Majesty's Government of supporting exports of defence equipment worldwide are more than covered by the levies that are charged to exporters in recognition of research and development expenditure funded by the Ministry of Defence.

Trident

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about Government proposals to locate the Trident base in Scotland.

Mr. Stanley: A wide variety of representations about the Government's Trident proposals have been received. No separate record is maintained of representations dealing specifically with the proposal to locate the Trident base in Scotland.

Berlin Brigade (Equipment)

Mr. Hawksley asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any orders are to be signed in the near future for armoured personnel carriers intended for use by the Berlin Brigade of the British Army.

Mr. Stanley: The possible purchase of hard-skinned troop carrying vehicles for the Berlin Brigade remains under consideration. No decisions have yet been taken.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Maintenance

Mr. Thurnham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about raising the ceiling for the payment of maintenance for spouses and children in line with the raising of personal allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I assume my hon. Friend is referring to the limits for small maintenance payments which must be paid without deduction of tax. A Treasury order was made in February (SI 1986 No. 328) introducing new limits for payments due on or after 6 April 1986 as follows:

(a) £48 a week or £208 a month for payments made by one spouse to another, and for payments made to a person under 21 for his or her own benefit; and

(b) £25 a week or £108 a month for payments to any other person for the benefit of a person under 21.

These new limits exceed the current personal allowances and were announced in an Inland Revenue Press Release on 27 February.

Public Sector Construction

Mr. Wigley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the average per capita cost of one man employed in public sector construction work in the United Kingdom.

Mr. MacGregor: It is not possible to calculate reliable estimates of cost per job for any category of Government spending. Such estimates depend on the definitions and assumptions used, as well as the time scale chosen.

Income Tax

Dr. MacDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update, to take account of the 1986 Budget, the information on income tax reductions provided in his reply of 4 April 1985 to the hon. Member for Thurrock, *Official Report*, columns *709-710*.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the amount of income tax collected, the amount of taxable income, and the number of taxpayers in each Scottish region, English and Welsh county, and in Greater London.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Personal Taxation

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out full details of the personal taxation and structure as at present in force in *(a)* France, *(b)* Japan, *(c)* Canada, *(d)* *(e)* the United States of America and *(e)* West Germany.

Mr. Moore: Personal income tax systems are complex and the details differ substantially from country to country.

The information given in the tables below provides some indication of the rates and structures of taxation levied at national level in the countries mentioned.

Table 1
Income Tax Thresholds in £—employment income

	Single Person	*Married Couple with no dependent children*
France	4,215	4,635
Japan	2,475	3,385
Canada	2,130	3,970
USA	1,810	3,135
West Germany	1,795	3,100

Notes:

(a) The thresholds represent the gross employment income at which liability to tax begins.

(b) the thresholds are those for 1986, except in the case of France where the 1985 thresholds are quoted. This is because France will not fix its rate for 1986 until the end of the year.

(c) It is assumed in the case of the married couple that the husband is the sole earner.

(d) All thresholds take account of the universal minimum deductions for expenses, personal allowances, the deductability, where applicable, of social security contributions and other standard reliefs.

(e) The thresholds have been converted to sterling at the purchasing power equivalent of sterling in Novermber 1985 (the latest date for which we have figures). The purchasing power equivalents are calculated on the basis of updated OECD figures.

Table 2
Rates of tax on bands of net taxable employment income in £
(i) France
Single person

Taxable income	*Rate per cent.*
0– 1,278	0
1,279– 1,336	5
1,337– 1,584	10
1,585– 2,504	15
2,505– 3,220	20
3,221– 4,049	25
4,050– 4,894	30
4,895– 5,647	35
5,648– 9,408	40
9,409–12,940	45
12,941–15,304	50
15,306–17,411	55
17,412–19,734	60
Over 19,734	65

Married couple with no dependent children

Taxable income	*Rate per cent.*
0– 2,555	0
2,556– 2,670	5
2,671– 3,167	10
3,168– 5,009	15
5,010– 6,439	20
6,440– 8,090	25
8,091– 9,788	30
9,789–11,293	35
11,294–18,816	40
18,817–25,879	45
25,880–30,611	50
30,612–34,821	55
34,822–39,468	60
Over 39,468	65

There are reductions in tax as follows:—
Tax liability up to £1,855: 8 per cent.
Tax liability up to £2,320: 7·99 per cent–3·01 per cent. (reducing)
Tax liability up to £2,780: 3 per cent.

(ii) Japan
Single person/married couple with no dependent children

Taxable income	*Rate per cent.*
0– 1,225	10·5
1,226– 2,941	12
2,942– 4,902	14
4,903– 7,353	17
7,354– 9,804	21
9,805– 14,706	25
14,707– 19,608	30
19,609– 24,510	35
24,511– 29,412	40
29,413– 36,765	45
36,766– 49,020	50
49,021– 73,529	55
73,530–122,549	60
122,550–196,078	65
Over 196,078	70

(iii) Canada
Single person/married couple with no dependent children

Taxable income	*Rate per cent.*
0– 599	6
600– 1,198	16
1,199– 2,395	17
2,396– 3,593	18
3,594– 5,988	19
5,989– 8,383	20
8,384–10,778	23
10,779–16,766	25
16,767–28,742	30
Over 28,742	34

A surcharge is levied where the tax exceeds £2,750 and an additional surcharge of 5 per cent. is levied where tax exceeds £6,875.

(iv) United States of America
Single person

Taxable income	*Rate per cent.*
0– 1,333	0
1,334– 1,973	11
1,974– 2,554	12
2,555– 3,769	14
3,770– 4,930	15
4,931– 6,263	16
6,264– 7,484	18
7,485– 8,704	20
8,705–10,559	23
10,560–13,634	26
13,635–16,710	30
16,711–19,785	34
19,786–24,075	38
24,076–32,081	42
32,082–47,457	48
Over 47,457	50

Married couple with no dependent children making a joint return

Taxable income	*Rate per cent.*
0– 1,973	0
1,974– 3,194	11
3,195– 4,409	12
4,410– 6,903	14
6,904– 9,285	16
9,286–11,720	18
11,721–14,274	22
14,275–17,349	25
17,350–20,419	28
20,420–26,570	33
26,571–34,812	38
34,813–49,662	42
49,663–63,468	45
63,469–94,220	49
Over 94,220	50

(v) West Germany

Single person

No income tax is levied on the first £1,030 of net taxable income.

A 22 per cent. rate applies to the band of taxable income from £1,030 to £4,060.

Thereafter the rate rises gradually to 56 per cent. which applies to the band of taxable income in excess of £29,220.

Married couple with no dependent children making a joint return

No income tax is levied on the first £2,060 of net taxable income.

A 22 per cent. rate applies to the band of taxable income from £2,060 to £8,120.

Thereafter the rate rises gradually to 56 per cent. which applies to the band of taxable income in excess of £58,440.

Notes:

(a) The figures relate to 1986 except in the case of *France* where the 1985 figures are quoted. France will not fix its rates for 1986 until the end of the year.

(b) The bands of taxable income have been converted to sterling at the purchasing power equivalent to sterling in November 1985 (the latest available figures). The purchasing power equivalents are calculated on the basis of updated OECD figures.

(c) There are also local income taxes in Japan, Canada and the United States of America. These constitute a not insignificant additional tax burden.

(d) Social security contributions vary from country to country and are paid in addition to income tax.

(e) Methods of computing taxable income differ widely from one country to another. Greater or larger reliefs and deductions are allowed in calculating taxable income. A mere comparison of tax rates does not therefore give a complete picture.

Married Man's Tax Allowance

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost to the Exchequer at the 1986-87 tax rates announced in the Budget of the married man's tax allowance in excess of the corresponding single persons' allowance; how much of this cost is attributable to taxpayers aged below 65 years; and what is the weekly value of this extra relief to the married man paying income tax at the standard rate.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

EC Budget

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the most up-to-date figures for the United Kingdom contribution to the EEC budget in each year from 1975 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1985 prices.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Structural Funds

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the payments received from the United Kingdom for each of the structural funds from 1975 for each year for *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* Scotland.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will give further details of the proposal announced in his Budget statement to restrict eligibility for tax relief under the business expansion scheme where the company has a high proportion of its assets in land and buildings.

Mr. Moore: My right hon. Friend's Budget proposal for changes to the business expansion scheme have given rise to a number of queries which go beyond what was covered in the Budget day press release put out by the Inland Revenue. I have authorised the Inland Revenue to issue today a further Press Release giving a fuller description of the proposed restriction on a company's holding of land and buildings.

Tax Relief

Mr. Frank Field asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for 1978-79 and for the latest available date the revenue cost of granting tax relief for (i) life assurances, (ii) mortgage tax relief, (iii) approved pension schemes, (iv) employers' contributions to funded pension schemes, (v) retirement annuity premiums, (vi) age allowance and (vii) capital gains exemption for selling main residence; if he will express the growth in each of these totals in terms of a percentage increase in *(a)* money terms and *(b)* real terms; and if each set of data for both points in time could be expressed as a percentage of total Government revenue.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 March 1986, c. *222-23*]: The information for 1978-79 and the latest year, for which comparable data are available, is as follows: 1985-86 for all items except (iii) and (iv) where data relate to 1984-85. The figures represent the reduction in tax liability resulting from the existence of the reliefs; they should not be interpreted as the tax yields from withdrawing each relief.

£ million

	1978-79	*1985-86*
(i) Life assurance	260	640
(ii) Mortgage interest	1,258	4,750
(iii) Approved pension schemes	450	1,750
(iv) Employers' contributions to funded pension schemes	1,200	1,950
(v) Retirement annuity premiums	70	325
(vi) Age allowance	265	425
(vii) Capital gains exemptions for selling main residence	1,500	2,500

Percentage change—1978-79 to 1985-86

	In money terms	*In real terms**
(i) Live assurance	146	31
(ii) Mortgage interest	278	102
(iii) Approved pension schemes	†289	†120
(iv) Employers' contributions to funded pension schemes	†62	†−8
(v) Retirement annuity premiums	364	148
(vi) Age allowance	60	−15
(vii) Capital gains exemptions for selling main residence	67	−11

* By reference to movements in the retail prices index.
† 1984-85.

*As percentage of government revenue**

	1978-79	1985-86
(i) Life assurance	0·6	0·7
(ii) Mortgage interest	3·1	4·9
(iii) Approved pension schemes	1·1	†1·9
(iv) Employers' contributions to funded pension schemes	2·9	†2·1
(v) Retirement annuity premiums	0·2	0·3
(vi) Age allowance	0·6	0·4
(vii) Capital gains exemptions for selling main residence	3·6	2·6

* Inland Revenue taxes, Customs and Excise duties, VED, NIS and royalties.

† 1984-85.

Notes for items:—

(i) Life assurance premium relief was abolished for contracts made on or after 14 March 1984. Costs are net of the public expenditure element.

(ii) Includes the cost of the former option mortgage scheme which was subsumed under the arrangements for giving mortgage interest relief at source (MIRAS) from April 1983 The cost of the option mortgage scheme was as follows:

	£ million
1978-79	148
1979-80	189
1980-81	228
1981-82	262
1982-83	306
1983-84	*17

*(for claims in respect of earlier years)

(iii) Composite estimates published in the relevant Public Expenditure White Paper on the basis set out in the Inland Revenue's note of February 1978 to the General Sub-Committee of the Expenditure Committee (second report 1977-78, Appendix 15). The latest comparable estimate is for 1984-85. This approach to the calculation of the cost of pension scheme reliefs included the cost of relief for employees' contributions, and funds' investment income, net of tax paid on pensions received, plus tax in excess of the basic rate on the estimated income element of pensions received. The cost of the exemption from Capital Gains tax is not known.

Costs of three of the components of pensions reliefs for 1985-86 are shown below. The total cost of tax reliefs for pension schemes cannot be calculated by summing the costs of the individual reliefs since this would imply a considerable degree of multiple taxation.

Cost of Reliefs for:—	*1985-86 £ million*
Employees' contributions to funded pension schemes	1,400
Pension funds' investment income (excluding capital gains for which no reliable estimate is available)	3,500
Lump sums on retirement (assuming relief at the basic rate)	1,000

(iv) Calendar year series. Latest comparable data are for 1984-85. These estimates are particularly tentative and are on the basis that employers' contributions are not taxed as a benefit in kind of the employee.

(vi) Cost of the excess of age allowances over and above the corresponding single person's and married man's allowances.

Taxation

Mr. Rooker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will construct an index, with 1978-79 equalling 100, of the changes in the level of income tax and national insurance contributions for each subsequent year for a taxpayer on *(a)* half, *(b)* two thirds, *(c)* average, *(d)* five times and *(e)* 10 times average earnings for households where the taxpayer is (i) single, (ii) married, no children, (iii) married with two children and (iv) married with four children, in all cases assuming the wife does not work.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 March 1986, c. *307-8*]: The following table shows *(a)* income tax plus national insurance contributions less child benefit, where appropriate, as a percentage of gross earnings; and *(b)* real net income after income tax, national insurance contributions and child benefit in index number form with 1978-79 equalling 100. The calculations assume that the taxpayer has no reliefs other than the appropriate personal allowance and that national insurance contributions are at the contracted-in rate. Average earnings are those for full-time males paid at adult rates whose pay was not affected by absence. Figures for 1985-86 and 1986-87 are provisional.

Multiple of average earnings

	Half		Two-thirds		One		Five		Ten	
	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)
Single										
1978-79	23·5	100·0	27·5	100·0	31·5	100·0	52·2	100·0	67·5	100·0
1979-80	22·9	102·6	26·3	103·4	29·7	104·4	42·8	121·6	51·4	151·8
1980-81	24·7	103·5	27·7	104·9	30·7	106·3	44·3	122·5	52·1	154·6
1981-82	26·9	100·1	29·6	101·7	32·3	103·5	46·4	117·3	53·2	150·5
1982-83	27·3	100·3	30·1	101·7	33·0	103·2	45·9	119·3	53·0	152·5
1983-84	27·0	104·6	30·0	105·8	33·0	107·1	45·1	125·7	52·5	159·6
1984-85	26·5	108·4	29·6	109·5	32·7	110·7	45·3	129·0	52·6	164·0
1985-86	26·3	110·9	29·5	111·9	32·6	113·1	45·5	131·0	52·8	166·8
1986-87	25·8	115·3	28·9	116·7	31·9	118·2	45·7	135·1	52·8	172·3
Married										
1978-79	16·0	100·0	21·9	100·0	27·8	100·0	50·5	100·0	66·5	100·0
1979-80	16·0	101·7	21·1	102·7	26·3	103·8	41·5	120·2	50·7	149·6
1980-81	17·9	102·7	22·6	104·1	27·3	105·7	42·9	121·1	51·5	152·3
1981-82	20·8	98·7	25·0	100·5	29·3	102·5	45·2	115·8	52·6	148·1
1982-83	20·8	99·4	25·3	100·9	29·8	102·5	44·6	118·0	52·3	150·2
1983-84	20·1	104·1	24·9	105·3	29·6	106·7	43·7	124·4	51·9	157·3
1984-85	19·3	108·3	24·2	109·3	29·2	110·5	43·9	127·8	51·9	161·8

	Half		Two-thirds		One		Five		Ten	
	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)
1985-86	19·0	110·8	24·0	111·8	29·0	113·0	44·1	129·8	52·1	164·6
1986-87	18·9	114·8	23·7	116·1	28·5	117·7	44·2	133·8	52·1	169·9
Married with 2 children (both under 11)										
1978-79	2·4	100·0	11·5	100·0	20·9	100·0	48·8	100·0	65·6	100·0
1979-80	1·4	102·8	10·2	103·3	18·9	104·1	40·0	119·1	50·0	147·9
1980-81	4·9	102·4	12·9	103·5	20·8	105·1	41·6	119·7	50·8	150·3
1981-82	7·3	99·5	14·9	100·7	22·5	102·5	43·9	114·6	51·9	146·3
1982-83	6·9	100·6	14·9	101·5	22·8	102·8	43·2	116·8	51·6	148·4
1983-84	5·9	105·6	14·2	106·2	22·4	107·2	42·3	123·2	51·2	155·5
1984-85	5·0	109·8	13·5	110·2	22·0	111·1	42·4	126·6	51·2	159·9
1985-86	5·2	111·7	13·7	112·2	22·1	113·1	42·7	128·5	51·4	162·6
1986-87	5·7	114·9	13·8	115·9	21·9	117·4	42·9	132·4	51·5	167·8
Married with 4 children (two under 11, one 11-15 and one over 16)										
1978-79	−11·7	100·0	0·2	100·0	13·3	100·0	46·7	100·0	64·5	100·0
1979-80	−13·3	103·1	−0·8	102·7	11·6	103·6	38·5	117·3	49·3	145·5
1980-81	−8·1	101·7	3·1	102·0	14·3	103·8	40·3	117·7	50·2	147·7
1981-82	−6·2	99·5	4·8	99·8	15·8	101·7	42·5	112·9	51·3	143·9
1982-83	−7·0	101·0	4·5	100·9	15·9	102·3	41·8	115·1	50·9	146·0
1983-84	−8·4	106·1	3·5	105·8	15·3	106·9	40·9	121·4	50·4	153·0
1984-85	−9·3	110·3	2·8	109·8	14·8	110·7	41·0	124·8	50·5	157·4
1985-86	−8·6	111·7	3·3	111·3	15·2	112·4	41·3	126·6	50·7	159·9
1986-87	−7·5	114·4	3·9	114·5	15·2	116·2	41·6	130·3	50·8	164·9

Mr. Frank Field asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will present in tabular form data for the financial years 1978-79 and 1986-87 on *(a)* the tax threshold for (i) a single person, (ii) a married couple and (iii) a married couple with two children and *(b)* the eligibility for supplementary benefit for each of these groups taking the latest data on average housing costs and assuming for the two child family one child is above and one below the age of 11 years; and what is the eligibility for family income supplement for a family with two children.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 March 1986]: The information is as follows:

(i) *Income tax allowances*

	1978-79 £	per week	1986-87 £	per week
Single person	985	18·94	2,335	44·90
Married couple	1,535	29·52	3,655	70·29
Married couple with two children*	1,770	34·04	3,655	70·29

* One child aged under 11, one aged between 11 and 15.

(ii) *Supplementary benefit eligibility levels**

	†1978-79 Short Term Rate £	†1978-79 Long Term Rate £	‡1986-87 Short Term Rate £	‡1986-87 Long Term Rate £
Single Person‖	15·55	19·90	29·80	37·90
Married couple	25·55	31·55	48·40	60·65
Married couple with two children¶	37·10	43·40	73·90	86·15

* Benefit is only payable when resources fall below these levels.

† Scale rates November 1978 to October 1979. An additional amount was then allowed for housing costs, on average £6·54 a week.

‡ Proposed scale rates July 1986 to March 1987. Help with rent and rates is now given separately under the Housing Benefit Scheme. Supplementary Benefit recipients qualify for 100 per cent. rebates.

‖ Householder.

¶ One child aged 5 to 10, One child 11 to 12.

(iii) *FIS eligibility levels**

	1978-79 £	1986-87 £
Couple with two children†	50·00	111·25

* Benefit is only payable when gross income falls below those levels.

† One child under 11, one child over 11.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Post Office (Wales)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the numbers of people employed by the Post Office in Wales in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1982 and *(c)* at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Butcher: I understand from the Post Office that the available information relates only to staff employed in the area covered by the postal board for Wales and the Marches (which, apart from Wales, includes parts of Cheshire, Hereford and Worcester, and Shropshire). The figures are as follows:

February	Number
1979	8,660
1982	8,644
1986	8,847

The figures include part-time staff counted as equivalent to half full-time employees.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the numbers of *(a)* post offices and *(b)* sub-post offices in Wales in (i) 1979 and (ii) the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Butcher: I understand from the Post Office that the information requested is as follows:

	Crown offices	Sub-post offices
1979	98	1,752
1986*	91	1,647

* February.

The figure for 1979 is an estimate, because at that time the Post Office did not maintain records separately identifying offices in Wales and those in England within the area covered by the postal board for Wales and the Marches. The estimate assumes that 80 per cent. of the offices in that area are within Wales.

Computers and Software

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the policy of (i) the Central Computer Telecommunications Agency and (ii) his Department regarding the purchase or the receipt of tenders for computers and software from companies which seek to impose extra-territorial controls on the movement and resale of their products; and if he will make a statement

Mr. Alan Clark: This Department does not accept any extra-territorial constraints when making such purchases. The Central Computer and Telecomunications agency is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

United States (Export Denials List)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his policy towards the implementation and publicising of the United States export denials list in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The United States denied parties list has no status in United Kingdom law. Companies should contact my Department if they appear on the list in the course of legitimate trading.

United States Products (Extra-territorial Controls)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the policy towards the support with grants and other public funds of companies which build products which are subsequently sold in the United Kingdom on the basis of United States extra-territorial controls; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Decisions about the payment of grants and other public funds to companies are made on the basis of all relevant circumstances.

Cable Form (Electrical Engineers)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if Cable Form (Electrical Engineers) Ltd. of Romiley has received any public funds since 1979.

Mr. Butcher: Cableform Ltd. of Romiley in Cheshire has received assistance from the Department of Trade and Industry under the Science and Technology Act 1965 and the Industrial Development Acts. The normal terms and conditions of Departmental assistance apply.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will set up an inquiry under section 435 of the Companies Act 1985 into the performance of the directors' duties under section 309—directors to have regard to interests of employees—in respect of the sale of Cable Form (Electrical Engineers) Ltd. of Romiley to Fisher Karpark Industries Ltd.

Mr. Howard: If the hon. Member would send me details of his reasons for suggesting an inquiry, I will consider his request further.

Fisher Karpark Ltd.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has received any application from Fisher Karpark Ltd. for financial assistance from his Department in connection with the transfer of production from Cable Form at Romiley to its factories at Sowerby Bridge.

Mr. Butcher: I am not aware of any such application.

Systime plc

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the Department of Trade and Industry representatives and those of the British Technology Group at the board meeting of Systime plc on 19 January 1983 received a copy of the revised minutes of that meeting dated 27 January 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Copies of the revised minutes referred to were received by both the Department and the BTG.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) why Mr. Alastair MacDonald and Mr. Bill Wigglesworth of his Department attended a board meeting of Systime plc on 19 January 1983; what action was taken by them arising from the meeting; and if he will make a statement;

(2) why Sir Jeffrey Sterling attended a board meeting of Systime plc on 19 January 1983; what action was taken by him arising from the meeting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Department of Industry officials attended a number of meetings and discussions in the early months of 1983 which were aimed at finding a resolution to the serious financial difficulties which Systime faced at that time. Sir Jeffrey Sterling participated in some of these discussions in his capacity as special adviser to the then Secretary of State for Industry.

Property Ownership

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received on the subject of unitisation in property ownership; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I have received a number of representations from those interested in the concept of unitising property, and the subject was discussed on 6 March in the Standing Committee considering the Financial Services Bill. I refer my hon. Friend to what my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher) said on that occasion at columns 465 to 467. Discussions are continuing with interested parties, including other Government Departments.

Citizens Band Radio

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will itemise *(a)* the total number of prosecutions brought and *(b)* the total number of convictions secured for offences involving unauthorised possession and use of citizens band radio equipment in each of the last six years; and if he will further categorise these by the type of offence charged.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

South Africa

Mr. Brandon-Bravo asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will report on how British companies have complied with the European Community's code of conduct for companies with interests in South Africa during the 12-month period to 30 June 1985.

Mr. Alan Clark: By 18 March 1985, 172 companies had submitted reports to the Department under the code of conduct. Copies of the reports, and of the Department's analysis and summary have, as in previous years, been placed in the Library of each House. These documents may also be inspected at the Department's library, at the British embassy in Pretoria, at the British consulate-general in Johannesburg, and at the British consulates in Cape Town and Durban.

Reports were received from the overwhelming majority of British companies with interests in South Africa. Of those companies whose interests are known or believed to warrant a full report under the code, only three declined to submit returns.

The reporting period was characterised by continued economic recession in which wage rates throughout the South African economy generally failed to keep pace with consumer price inflation. Against this background, the performance of British subsidiaries in increasing the provision of fringe benefits to their black employees seems particularly creditable. Once again, the returns also showed evidence of increased dealings with South Africa's emerging trade unions and a growing commitment to training, education and community projects.

The Government are grateful to companies for their continued efforts in reporting and will be urging them to comply fully with the revised code which is operational for the ensuing reporting period.

Mr. Graham Day

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the position of Mr. Graham Day, a non-executive director of the Laird Group, in the light of the possible acquisition by that company of Leyland Bus.

Mr. Channon: I told the House on 5 March that Mr. Graham Day is to become chairman of BL plc in succession to Sir Austin Bide once decisions have been made on the future of the main Land Rover-Leyland businesses. The Government hope that it will be possible to reach decisions on the future of Leyland Bus shortly after that.

Mr. Day is aware, as a director of The Laird Group, of their strategy regarding bus manufacture. If he were to become a director or chairman of BL before the matter of the disposal of the bus business had been concluded, he would therefore be unable within BL to deal with that matter. In that event he would nominate a BL executive to act in his place and report to the board and deal with the Government on it as necessary.

Newspaper Industry (Grants)

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what Government grants in 1985 and 1986 have been given to the newspaper industry in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the rest of the United Kingdom, for the installation of high technology equipment.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 March 1986]: I regret that information is not available in the form requested.

However, since 1 January 1985 newspaper printers and publishers have been offered a total of £122,000 of new style regional development grants in respect of projects in Great Britain.

Payments of old RDG are categorised by reference to the Standard Industrial classification 1968 and can only be attributed to groups of related industries (SIC orders). The newspaper industry falls within SIC order XVIII—paper printing and publishing. The latest figures available of such payments to companies within that SIC order for Great Britain for the period 1 January 1985 to 31 December 1985 total £26·6 million, of which £7·1 million relates to projects in Scotland.

In addition companies in Northern Ireland falling within that SIC Order received £3·5 million of regional assistance in the financial year beginning 1 April 1984.

ENVIRONMENT

Insulation

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the public alleging the abuse of the insulation grant system through pressure selling; and if he has any plans to discuss with local authorities more effective supervision of contractors for grant-aided work.

Mr. John Patten: The Department has in the past received representations from the public about pressure selling in connection with the Homes Insulation Scheme. Local authorities are primarily responsible for the operation of the scheme and the department's regional offices discuss regularly with authorities the operation of the scheme in practice, including the problems and types of malpractices. If the hon. Member is concerned about a particular case perhaps he would write to me with the details.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the work of the interdepartmental group examing the future of the homes insulation scheme; which Departments are represented on it; what representations it has received; if it will be issuing a consultative paper; and when he expects it to report.

Sir George Young: There is no such group. My Department keeps the scheme under continuing review and consults the energy efficiency office of the Department of Energy and other Government Departments as necessary.

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is considering any alterations to the home insulation grant scheme, so as to incorporate other effective energy-saving measures within its remit.

Sir George Young: The scope of the homes insulation scheme is kept under review including possible extensions to other energy saving measures. However, my right hon. Friend has no plans at present to widen or extend the scheme.

Draughtproofing

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he intends to take to promote an effective standard for draughtproofing in the United Kingdom; and what bodies he is consulting about this.

Sir George Young: A comprehensive draughtproofing standard would need to cover both new and replacement windows and doors, as well as the draughtproofing of existing windows and doors. Many new replacement windows and some doors are draughtproofed in the factory, and for windows such work is already covered by a series of British Standards. The draughtproofing of existing windows and doors is not yet covered by standards. Officials met the Draughtproofing Advisory Association last December to discuss the results of research carried out by the Building Research Establishment in draughtproofing materials and performance with a view to developing standards for materials.

Land Compensation

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to extend the Land Compensation Act 1973 to include works undertaken by nationalised industries.

Mr. Tracey: Part I of the Land Compensation Act 1973 creates an entitlement to compensation where the value of land is depreciated by the use of new public works and no other legal remedy is available. These provisions already apply to works undertaken by nationalised industries, and I am not aware of any problem requiring amending legislation.

Housing Defects

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will include post-1960 Lindsay Parkinson built properties as defective for the purposes of the Housing Defects Act; and what representations he has received about this matter.

Mr. John Patten: I have had no recent representations that Lindsay Parkinson houses should be designated under the Housing Defects Act. However, I am aware that some owners of Lindsay Parkinson HSSB houses built by Basildon development corporation appear to be having difficulties with their resale. My Department has recently received an assessment of the situation from the corporation and we will of course consider this most carefully.

Cherwell District Council (Precept)

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how the district council precept for the Cherwell district council for 1986-87 compares in real terms with the precept for 1976-77; and how this change compares with the average of changes for all district councils in England over the last 10 years.

Mrs. Rumbold: The figures for local rates in the two years are not comparable due to changes made in 1981-82 to the method of distributing government grants. At ratepayers level the domestic rate in Cherwell has risen by 50 per cent. in real terms (using the GDP deflator) between 1976-77 and 1986-87 compared with the average for all English shire districts of 47 per cent.

Since 1981-82, Cherwell has reduced its local rate by 6 per cent. in real terms compared with an increase of 7 per cent. for the average of all English shire districts.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of local authority rate fund expenditure in England has been paid by central Government and what proportion by local authority ratepayers for each of the last five years.

Mrs. Rumbold: Latest estimates are as follows:

Percentage of rate fund revenue expenditure

	1981-82 per cent.	*1982-83 per cent.*	*1983-84 per cent.*	*1984-85 per cent.*	*1985-86 per cent.*
Aggregate Exchequer grant plus non-relevant grants	56·0	52·7	51·7	50·6	47·6
Rates rebates (see notes)	1·6	2·3	4·5	5·0	5·3
Rates (excluding rebates) (see notes)	43·5	45·3	42·8	44·4	46·5

Notes:

1. Expenditure is net of sales, fees and charges.
2. Non-relevant grants include mandatory student awards and housing benefit.
3. The figures do not sum exactly to 100 per cent. because of net drawings or additions to balances.
4. Rates rebates figures include grant paid in respect of certificated rate rebates to supplementary benefit recipients. Prior to the partial introduction of Housing Benefit in November 1982 and its full implementation from April 1983 such sums were included with rates (net of rebates).

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities in England received more in real terms in their rate support grant settlement for 1986 as compared with 1985.

Mrs. Rumbold: Following is the information:

Shropshire
Bolton
Bury
Manchester
Oldham
Rochdale
Salford
Stockport

Tameside
Trafford
Wigan
Knowsley
Liverpool
St. Helens
Sefton
Wirral
Barnsley
Doncaster
Rotherham
Sheffield
Gateshead
Newcastle upon Tyne
North Tyneside
South Tyneside
Sunderland
Birmingham
Coventry
Dudley
Wolverhampton
Bradford
Calderdale
Kirklees
Leeds
Wakefield
Greater Manchester Police Authority
Merseyside Police Authority
South Yorkshire Police Authority
Northumbria Police Authority
West Midlands Police Authority
West Yorkshire Police Authority
Greater Manchester Fire and Civil Defence Authority
Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority
South Yorkshire Fire and Civil Defence Authority
Tyne and Wear Fire and Civil Defence Authority
West Midlands Fire and Civil Defence Authority
West Yorkshire Fire and Civil Defence Authority
Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority
Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Authority
West Midlands Passenger Transport Authiority
West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority
Greenwich
Hackney
Hammersmith and Fulham
Islington
Kensington and Chelsea
Lambeth
Lewisham
Southwark
Tower Hamlets
Wandsworth
Barking and Dagenham
Barnet
Bexley
Brent
Bromley
Croydon
Ealing
Enfield
Haringey
Harrow
Havering
Hounslow
Kingston-upon-Thames
Merton
Newham
Redbridge
Richmond-upon-Thames
Sutton
Waltham Forest
London Fire and Civil Defence Authority
Bath
Bristol
Wansdyke
Woodspring
North Bedfordshire
Luton
South Bedfordshire
Bracknell
Reading
Slough
Wycombe
Cambridge
Chester
Halton
Middlesbrough
Caradon
Carrick
Kerrier
North Cornwall
Penwith
Restormel
Barrow in Furness
Derby
East Devon
Exeter
North Devon
Plymouth
Teignbridge
Torbay
Bournemouth
Weymouth and Portland
Easington
Teesdale
Brighton
Hastings
Hove
Castle Point
Colchester
Epping Forest
Maldon
Southend-on-Sea
Tendring
Cheltenham
Gloucester
Tewkesbury
Basingstoke and Deane
Gosport
Havant
Portsmouth
Rushmoor
Southampton
Hereford
Leominster
South Herefordshire
Worcester
Broxbourne
Hertsmere
North Hertfordshire
Watford
Great Grimsby
Kingston upon Hull
Medina
Canterbury
Dover
Gillingham
Gravesham
Maidstone
Rochester upon Medway
Tunbridge Wells
Blackpool
Hyndburn
Pendle
Preston
Leicester
East Lindsey
Lincoln
Great Yarmouth
North Norfolk
Norwich
Kettering
Northampton
Wellingborough
Alnwick
Berwick-upon-Tweed
Castle Morpeth
Scarborough
York
Newark and Sherwood

Nottingham
Cherwell
Oxford
Vale of White Horse
Shrewsbury and Atcham
South Shropshire
Taunton Deane
West Somerset
East Staffordshire
Stafford
Stoke-on-Trent
Ipswich
Mid Suffolk
Waveney
Guildford
Mole Valley
Runnymede
Spelthorne
Surrey Heath
Tandridge
Warwick
Arun
Worthing
Kennet
Salisbury
Isles of Scilly

Computers and Software

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on the purchase or use in his Department of computers or software which are subject to extraterritorial control on their use, movement or resale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The computing procurement policy of my Department is to obtain the best value for money in line with the Department's strategy for information technology. Procurements are carried out through the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency in the Treasury and in accord with Government policy.

Countryside Act 1968 (Management Agreements)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the cost of long-term management agreements under section 15 of the Countryside Act 1968, making the distinction between alternative methods of payment and whether or not the sites are in less favoured areas; how many new agreements have been made in each of the last five years; and if he will classify these by cost per hectare for England, Scotland and Wales, respectively.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council as follows:

(a) It is not practicable, without disproportionate effort, to distinguish between agreements in less Favoured Areas and those in other areas. However, annual payments for net profits forgone are normally lower in less Favoured Areas than elsewhere because of lower potential productivity of the land.

(b) It is similarly impracticable to provide figures of agreements in each of the past 5 years. However, at 31 December 1985, the number of section 15 management agreements completed since the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 was:

Section 15 management agreements

	Number of agreements	*Hectares*	*Lump sums paid £*	*Annual payment commitment* £ per annum*
England	174	4,803	256,114	274,340
Scotland	70	4,741	170,456	105,395
Wales	12	231	5,022	9,348
Total	256	9,775	439,591	389,083

* Excluding arrears.

c. Detailed analysis by country is:
Payments mainly by lump sum

	Number of agreements	*Hectares*	*Lump sum paid £*	*Average cost per hectare (lump sum) £/ha*
England	34	1,257	256,114	204
Scotland	18	910	178,455	196
Wales	2	50	5,022	100
Total	54	2,217	439,591	198

Payments mainly by annual payment

	Number of agreements (a)	*Hectares (b)*	*Annual payment commitment (c) £ per annum*	*Average cost per hectare per annum (d) £ per hectare per annum*
England	140	3,546	274,340	77
Scotland	52	3,831	105,395	28
Wales	10	181	9,348	52
Total	202	7,558	389,083	51

Lifeline Project (Manchester)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement concerning the future of the Lifeline project in Manchester, the funding of which under urban aid is due to expire on 31 March.

Mr. John Patten: The submission by Manchester city council for renewal of urban programme funding of time expired projects, including the Lifeline project, is currently under consideration. A decision will be issued as soon as possible.

Greater London Enterprise Board

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he has refused the Greater London council consent to release £8 million to the Greater London Enterprise Board; if he has sought to meet board representatives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend was not satisfied that further expenditure in support of the Greater London Enterprise Board's activities at the expense of London ratepayers as a whole would be expedient.

Prior to reaching that decision a meeting was held with representatives of the Greater London council, the Greater London Enterprise Board and the London boroughs that are taking up membership of the Board.

GLC (Property Transfer)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to make a statutory instrument to transfer Greater London council seaside and country homes from the London Residuary Body to the Anchor Housing Association; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: It is our intention that the homes will pass to a housing association and I will consider with the London Residuary Body the best means of achieving this.

Thamesmead (Property Transfer)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to make a statutory instrument to transfer property in Thamesmead from the London Residuary Body to the Thamesmead Community Trust; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The means of transfer to Thamesmead Town Ltd. has yet to be decided.

National Coal Board Tenants

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to extend to National Coal Board tenants the same rights to exchange homes, as provided to secure tenants by the Housing and Building Control Act 1984.

Sir George Young: No. But I understand that the National Coal Board already allows its tenants to arrange exchanges.

Rate Demands

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to require local authorities to include in rate demands a statement of the amount demanded for the previous two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. There are no plans to add to the information local authorities are required to provide under the Rate Demands and Notice of Rates and Precepts Rules 1985.

Water Authorities

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what are the total capital assets of each individual water authority;

(2) what was the total outstanding financial debt of all the water authorities for the periods 1984-85 and 1985-86;

(3) what was the outstanding financial debt of each individual water authority for the periods 1983, 1984 and 1985, respectively;

(4) what are the total capital assets of all the water authorities.

Mr. John Patten: Information on the final debt of all the water authorities for the period 1985-86 will only be available when authorities have closed and published their accounts. I shall write then to the right hon. Gentlemen. The other information requested is as follows:

£ million

Regional Water Authority	*Net current cost assets at 31 March 1985*	*Loans outstanding at 31 March*	
		1984	*1985*
Anglian	3,241	792	838
Northumbrian	1,457	397	407
North West	4,277	811	851
Severn Trent	4,309	748	787
Southern	1,990	312	321
South West	1,079	133	140
Thames	4,633	423	385
Wessex	1,082	213	226
Yorkshire	3,300	469	507
All authorities	25,368	4,298	4,462

Net current cost assets exclude land drainage assets.

Water Analysis

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the regional water authorities are maintaining full, accurate and up-to-date records of all analyses of water samples as required under the Control of Pollution Act 1974;

(2) what plans he has to ensure that the Anglian water authority compiles and publishes full and accurate records of all analysis of water samples as required under the Control of Pollution Act 1974; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Regulations under the Control of Pollution Act were made last year prescribing the particulars to be included in the registers which the Anglian and all water authorities are required to maintain. The registers are available to officers of my Department and are open to public inspection. The particulars include details of samples of effluent taken under section 113(1) of the Water Resources Act 1963, of samples taken for water pollution control purposes of discharges of effluent by the authorities themselves and of samples of water taken for water pollution control purposes.

As part of its water privatisation plans, the Government will shortly issue a consultation paper on environmental issues and is considering seeking suggestions for possible ways of improving the value of the public registers.

Thamesmead

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how the London Residuary Body will determine the purchase price to the Thamesmead Community Trust for the land and property at Thamesmead currently owned by the Greater London council.

Sir George Young: The price will be negotiated between the London Residuary Body and Thamesmead Town Ltd.

Housing (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he has made to facilitate surveys of the whole of London's housing stock after the abolition of the Greater London council.

Sir George Young: We undertook a comprehensive inquiry in 1985 into the condition of local authority housing stock. In 1986, we intend to fund a comprehensive English house condition survey and there will be a parallel and more detailed survey of the local authority stock.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessments of Greater London's housing requirements are currently in preparation by his Department.

Sir George Young: Assessments of housing needs are prepared annually by London boroughs and discussed in detail with my Department as the basis for any housing investment programme allocations.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the local authorities he consulted over the terms of the order conferring on himself nomination rights to former Greater London council housing after 31 March.

Sir George Young: All London boroughs plus: the City; those district councils which received GLC housing stock under the housing transfer orders; and those councils where the GLC is able to exercise nomination rights on housing stock under town development schemes.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those Greater London council housing responsibilies, functions and activities which his predecessor originally proposed should become the responsibility of the London boroughs and which will now be transferred to the London Residuary Body.

Sir George Young: The ownership of Thamesmead estate will transfer to the LRB temporarily, but Thamesmead will shortly pass to Thamesmead Town Ltd. The GLC mortgage account will pass to the LRB, who will be expected to offer borrowers an opportunity to have their mortgage transferred to a private sector company. But no mortgage will be transferred without the consent of the borrower.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how, in the treatment of capital receipts from Greater London council mortgages, he proposes to ensure that there is no loss of housing investment resources to local authorities in London as a result of the abolition of the Greater London council.

Sir George Young: As I said in my reply of 11 February at column *396* to my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) we shall ensure that the spending power associated with the repayment of mortgage principal will be passed on to the boroughs.

House Building (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his current assessment of the need for the building of new homes in London over the next 10 years and of the number of renovations required over the same period.

Sir George Young: Assessments of housing needs are prepared annually by London boroughs and discussed in detail with my Department as the basis for any housing investment programme allocations.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to issue to all hon. Members in London the budget statement for 1986-87 of the London Residuary Body; if he will publish in the *Official Report* the impact on each London borough of the budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: This information is in the London Residuary Body's budget book, which is available from the LRB.

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which authority received the highest housing investment programme allocation in England for 1985-86; and what was the amount of the allocation.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Seaside and Country Homes

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications to build new seaside and country homes his Department has received from London authorities since 1 April 1985; and in how many of those cases he has intervened.

Sir George Young: None.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many additional staff have been employed or will be offered employment in his Department as a result of the new planning arrangements for London following the abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Tracey: Staff required for this work will be accommodated within planned manpower totals.

Crown Suppliers

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to privatise the Crown Suppliers; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I am still considering the recommendations of the team of officials which was asked to consider whether it would be in the public interest to transfer to the private sector all or part of the activities of the Crown Suppliers.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the Crown Suppliers' business is conducted with United Kingdom registered firms.

Sir George Young: Over the past three calendar years the amount of Crown Suppliers' non-fuel business placed with United Kingdom registered firms has varied between 94 per cent. and 96 per cent. of its total business.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the report on the future of the Crown Suppliers.

Sir George Young: The report of the review team, excluding only the material which is commercially sensitive, has been made available to the Civil Service trade unions but I do not propose to publish it more widely.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has held any consultations with the Civil Service unions on the future of the Crown Suppliers; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Yes; the Civil Service trade unions have been consulted and their views will be fully taken into account before decisions are made about the future of the Crown Suppliers.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any representations from firms dealing with the Crown Suppliers over the future of the Crown Suppliers; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: None direct, but the views of a number of firms were obtained by the review team and are included in the team's report.

EMPLOYMENT

Visual Display Units

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Paymaster General what representations have been received by the Health and Safety Executive in respect of visual display unit screens.

Mr. Trippier: The executive has received many inquiries at national and local level, from employers, trades unions, members of the public and others about the possible health effects of working with visual display units. It continues to keep the subject under review and has recently published a free leaflet "Working with VDUs". A copy has been placed in the Library.

Job Creation

Mr. Dormand asked the Paymaster General if he will list all the Government measures aimed at providing additional employment and the conditions relating to each one, including financial incentives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Our Department is responsible for a wide range of measures designed to generate employment and enterprise, support youth and adult training and provide help to long-term unemployed people.

The main measures aimed at providing additional employment are:

1. The enterprise allowance scheme which helps unemployed people who want to start up in business. Participants are paid a flat-rate taxable allowance of £40 a week for a maximum of 52 weeks. The scheme will be expanded to 100,000 places in 1986-87.
2. The small firms loan guarantee scheme which assists new or existing small businesses to raise loan finance. The scheme was extended in the Budget for a further three years and it is expected that up to 7,000 small firms will be helped over the next two years.
3. The community programme which provides jobs of up to a year's duration for longer-term unemployed adults on projects of benefit to the community. Those eligible are benefit recipients aged 18 to 24 who have been unemployed for at least six in the past nine months, and those aged 25 and over who have been unemployed for at least 12 in the past 15 months. Participants receive a wage, subject to an overall average for a project or group of projects of £67 per week from 1 April. An expansion of the programme, to 255,000 places was announced by the chancellor in his Budget statement.
4. The new workers scheme announced by the Chancellor in his budget statement, will, from 1 April subject to parliamentary approval, provide help in getting jobs to under 21 year olds who have just left YTS or who are too old for it; this will involve a payment of £15 per week for up to 52 weeks to employers who recruit people aged 20 and under in their first year of employment at wages of £55 a week or below and 20 year olds at £65 per week or below.
5. The job release scheme which makes it easier for older workers to give up work early and to release their jobs to unemployed people. It offers a range of weekly allowances from the date the applicant leaves work until the state pension age, provided the applicant's employer agrees to replace him or her by an unemployed person. The scheme is at present open to men aged 64, women aged 59, and disabled men aged 60 to 63.
6. The job splitting scheme is designed to encourage employers to provide more job opportunities by splitting an existing full-time job, or by combining regular overtime hours into a part-time job or by creating two new part-time jobs for people leaving particular Government schemes. For part-time jobs created and maintained for a period of at least 12 months a grant of £840 is paid to an employer in three equal instalments of £280.

I shall write to the hon. Member with details of the full range of assistance available.

Liverpool

Mr. Parry asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the Secretary of State's recent visit to Liverpool.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and noble Friend visited Merseyside on 21 March at the invitation of Councillor Neville Goldrein, Leader of the Conservative Group on Merseyside county council. During the morning he met county councillors and representatives of local industry and commerce at an informal reception, and visited Mullard Southport information technology Centre where he was extremely impressed by the standard of training given.

The afternoon's itinerary consisted of a visit to the prestigious Albert Dock complex in Liverpool. My right hon. and noble Friend expressed particular interest in the development's potential for job creation and tourism.

Radioactive Waste Storage

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Paymaster General where information is to be obtained on the procedures for licensing the three forms of radioactive waste storage repositories proposed by the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive, namely *(a)* above ground storage, *(b)* near surface subterranean storage and *(c)* deep cavity subterranean storage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Nuclear Installations Inspectorate will in due course publish its guidelines for licensing these sites. They will be available on request from the Inspectorate.

Enterprise and Employment

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Paymaster General what proportion of the further £195 million to be devoted to enterprise and employment measures in 1986-87 will be devoted to programmes in the west midlands region.

Mr. Lang: The measures operated by our Department are demand led and the proportion of spending in any region will be related to take-up. We have asked the Manpower Services Commission to consider how best the additional places can be allocated on the measures for which they are responsible.

Dr. K. Featherstone

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Paymaster General whether any work is being or has been undertaken for his Department by Dr. K. Featherstone of Stirling University.

Mr. Lang: Dr. K. Featherstone of Stirling University is not now and has not previously been engaged to do work for the Department of Employment.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Nellist asked the Paymaster General what would be the value of the present day YTS allowance if it had been increased since its inception in 1978 by *(a)* the rise in earnings and *(b)* the rise in the retail prices index.

Mr. Trippier: The youth opportunities programme allowance was £19·50 in 1978. If it had been increased in line with movements in the retail price index it would now be £38·05; if increased in line with movements in the average earnings index it would be £44·06.

The current YTS allowance is £27·30, and the allowance for second year trainees will be £35 from 1 April this year. Allowance levels must reflect the fact that trainees are only learning, and YTS provides substantially upgraded training compared with the youth opportunities programme.

Self-employed Persons

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Paymaster General what information is available to his Department on the proportion of the work force in other advanced economies who are classified as self-employed.

Mr. Lang: The latest available information for most other advanced countries is contained in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's "Labour Force Statistics 1963-83", a copy of which is in the Library. The proportion of people in civilian employment who are classified as self-employed or employers can be obtained from country tables III. It should be noted that for several countries the self-employed figures include the group unpaid family workers, and so are not comparable.

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Paymaster General if he will list for each year since 1956 the number of people in the United Kingdom classifed as self-employed and the proportion they represented of the total work force.

Mr. Lang: Quarterly estimates of the self employed and working population in the United Kingdom for the dates specified may be found in the following publications, copies of which are in the Library.

Date and Source

March 1956 to March 1959
British Labour Statistics
Historical Abstract 1886-1968
Table 118. (page 220)

June 1959 to December 1964
Department of Employment Gazette October 1975
Table 1 (page 1037)

March 1965 to December 1982
Employment Gazette
April 1985 Historical Supplement No. 1
Table 1.1 (page 4)

March 1983 to September 1985
Employment Gazette
March/April 1986 (Labour Market Data section)
Table 1.1 (page S8)

The published information for dates prior to June 1959 was calculated on a different basis from that used for subsequent periods in later publications. Therefore it is not comparable with the more recent information.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 94**

SESSION 1985-86

17th March–27th March 1986

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There will, however, be headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one will find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc., under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speakers rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

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